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THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES

ESSAYS AND QUESTIONS IN HISTORY

BY

A. MARY F. ROBINSON

(*Madame James Darmesteter*)

Duclaux, Mme. Agnes Mary Frances (Robinson)

LONDON

T FISHER UNWIN

26 PATERNOSTER SQUARE

MDCCCLXXXIX

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Dedication.

My dear Mr. Symonds,—*I send you a little book; different from the many volumes, plump with documents and the dignity of History, which I intended for you long ago. But, since I have no better thing to offer, take—dear Master—these rough and scattered pages. For to whom, if not to you, should I dedicate the book? When I look back, I see you at my side in all my studies; for the last ten years, there is not one of them which has not been confided to you, and, most of all, my dreams of History. So that whatever I write belongs in some sort to you; but especially this little volume of which we talked so much in your study at Davos two years ago. Do you remember how you guided me through the innumerable pages of Litta and of Muratori in quest of the secret of the French Claim to Milan? We did not find much of that, but we found so many better things; and, best of all, the happy hours which you illuminated! Hours in which you evoked for me, as we plunged deeper and deeper into your Chronicles, the great figures of the Past. At first they rose before me, pale and mute—silent and immaculate as the white recesses of your Alps; but, at the touch of your wand, they assumed their ancient colour and consistence—the very smile, the gait, the accent, the passions, that had moved them once beneath this sun that has survived them; their voices magically issued out of the silent yellow pages; the sound of their battles clashed anew along your windless valleys and eagle-haunted mountain tops. And, once alive, they remained alive for me.*

As I sat and wondered, a new desire awoke in me, an eager wish to seize these brilliant apparitions, to strip them of their

faded purple, to strip them of their form and colour, to lay them bare to their innermost tissue and catch the reason and the secret of their being.

And, first of all, to understand exactly what they did, and when, and why. Our beautiful chronicles were not always quite precise. I began to see that what I wanted must be sought in manuscripts and foreign archives. And, half afraid,

told you of my project for exchanging a cheerful holiday in Switzerland against a week or two of dull research in Paris. Since then I have worked long and hard, in Paris, in London, in Florence, and the writing of dead hands has grown familiar to me; but I have never forgotten that it was first in the solitude of your lofty valley, that my task grew plain before my mind. And now to whom, if not to you should I offer these scattered ruins of the thing undone—these first ineffectual sketches of that History of the French in Italy, *which still I mean to write? From Davos they took their flight; let them seek the nest again!*

If I had better profited by your lessons and your example, it would not have been a mere sheaf of fragments that I should have offered you to-day, but a Book, a solid and coherent whole consistently animated, in all the complexity and the unity of its subject, by an epoch, an idea, a man, or an event. Nothing else is really durable, permanently useful. It is true that I have tried (and may the candour of this avowal excuse its weakness!)—yes, I have tried, after the manner of essayists, to give an apparent unity to my fragments by means of a title, large and comfortable as the cloak of charity which covers in its vague expanse a host of strangers.

For, after all, what has Schwester Katrei to do with Charles VIII., or Isotta of Rimini with Mechtild of Magdeburg? Shall I avow that the volume is really the fragmentary essays towards two unwritten histories—one of the house of Hohenstaufen, the other of the French in Italy? Also I can

imagine you remarking that, from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth, my Middle Ages take long a-dying:

"*Les gens que vous tuez se portent assez bien.*"

And you might add that in a book on the end of the Middle Ages, it is strange to find not a line on the Loss of Constantinople, and not a chapter on the invention of Printing or the Discovery of America.

What can I do but acknowledge my incompleteness? Nay, I will even confess to you that I have my private doubts whether the Middle Ages are over yet—whether any period comes to an end at a given epoch, but does not rather still subsist, diminished yet puissant, stealing in unnoticed currents along the vast veins and secret fabric of the world. In many a turn of thought and habit, in many a disregarded constitution—in May Day and Manor Court, in the Land laws and the Judenhetze*—the Middle Ages are not over yet. Here and there they reappear and startle us in unexpected corners. That form of Nature which we know as History is, like every other evolution of Nature, too complex to be accurately fixed in words. Words only give the vague surroundings; they are the ill-fitting, ready-made clothes of a thought.*

Therefore, despite their official end, we may doubt whether we be done with the Middle Ages. And yet you will agree with me that the personages of my essays belong no longer wholly to the age in which they lived. Something came to an end then; something slowly began. Race of Cain and race of Abel, mystics lost in ecstasy, or captains of prey and plunder,—yet Eckhart, the forerunner of Hegel, and the sinister Giangaleazzo dreaming in a different fashion the dream of Count Cavour, was each unconsciously a precursor of the Modern Age.

The Beguines, bringing the dissolvent of mysticism to the authority of Rome; the Pope, in quitting his true capital for

Avignon; the Cardinals by opening the Schism: these, between them, have invented the Reformation. . . . Giangaleazzo Visconti, when he made his daughter of Orleans his heir, prepared the battles of Marignano and Pavia, and condemned Francis I. to his captivity in Spain. Even as the Feud of Orleans and Burgundy began the long rivalry of Francis and the Emperor, the great descendants of those angry houses. . . . Meanwhile the numerous invasions of Italy under the Dukes of Orleans, and still later, the triumphal journey of Charles VIII., brought back to France the splendour of the Renaissance. Thus Hallam closes the Middle Ages with the taking of Naples, in 1494. *However this be, if you are indulgent, dear Master, you may consider my essays a very humble and inadequate Introduction to the study of your Sixteenth Century.*

Perhaps I am the only reader who will have learned anything from the little book. And, after all, I am contented that it should be so. It is so much pleasanter to learn than to instruct; and in learning one meets with so many friends and helpers. I cannot tell you here of all who have befriended me, but I must at least mention to you the names of Canon Creighton, unfailing critic and sympathizer; of Mr. Bryce, who reached out an experienced hand to me and spared me several more mistakes in Feudal Law; of Mr. H. F. Brown of Venice, who procured me my Venetian transcripts; of Professor Villari and Professor Paoli of Florence (it was the latter who taught me Palæography); and of Comte Albert de Circourt of Paris, in whom I have found a quite invaluable adviser and correspondent,—for probably no historian in Europe is so familiar with the Lombard schemes of Louis d'Orléans as he.

To you I owe the largest debt of all. It is not only for the writing of a book I thank you here—

Ever sincerely yours,

A. MARY F. DARMESTETER.

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The Beguines and the Weaving Brothers.*

I.

With the approach of the thirteenth century, the world awoke from its long and dreamless sleep. Then began the age of faith, the miraculous century, starving for lack of bread and nourished upon heavenly roses. St. Louis and St. Elizabeth, Dominic the eloquent and the fiery Bonaventura, Thomas Aquinas and Francis the *glorioso poverello di Dio*, proclaim the enthusiastic spirit of the age. It is an age of chivalry no less in religion than in love, an age whose somewhat strained and mystical con-

* The principal sources for this and the two following articles are as follows :—Mosheim, "Institutiones Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ ;" Dr. Schmidt's "Strasburger Beginen-häuser m Mittelalter" and other pages by this master of mediæval religious thought; Dr. Preger's "Geschicte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter ;" the volume on "Le Panthéisme populaire au Moyen Age" of M. Auguste Jundt; Stockl's "Geschichte der Philosophie: Meister Eckhardt;" the writings on the School of Alexandria of M. Vacherot and M. Barthélemy Saint Hilaire; Mr. Vaughan's "Half-Hours with the Mystics;" and last, not least, the sermons of Eckhardt, the poems of Mechtild of Magdeburg, and the meditations and lives of Saint Gertrude and Saint Mechtild of Helfta.

ception of virtue is sweetened by a new strong impulse of human pity. The world begins to see; and the green growth of the earth, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, become clear and noticeable things in the eyes of the saints. The world awakes and feels. Jean de Matha and Félix de Valois, gentlemen of Meaux, visit the prisons of France, and redeem many hundred captives from Morocco. On all sides men begin to love the sick, the poor, the sinful; even to long for sickness and poverty, as if in themselves they were virtuous; even to wonder whether sin and evil may not be a holy means for mortifying spiritual pride. To rescue the captive, to feed the hungry, to nurse the leper, as unawares Elizabeth of Hungary tended Christ in her Thuringian city—this is the new ideal of mankind. And this age of feeling is no less an age of speculation, of metaphysical inquiry, of manifold heresies and schisms. No new Bernard stops with his earnest dogma the thousand theories which everywhere arise and spread.

The modern age has begun. The saints of the preceding years had been men of a more militant or monastic turn, dogmatic minds like Bernard of Clairvaux, Norbert, Thomas à Becket. The era of charity and speculative thought begins when the twelfth century is drawing near the close.

From the last year of the eleventh century until the Christians were finally driven out of Syria in 1291, there had been scarcely a break in the continual crusade. Throughout the twelfth century this enthusiasm of pity for the dead Redeemer left in the

hands of infidels was maintained at fever heat. Later it was softened and widened by the new spirit of charity towards ailing and erring humankind. But during the first hundred years of the Holy War it absorbed all that was holiest and purest, most ardent and noblest in European manhood. All went to fall upon the fields of Palestine, or to return strangely altered after many years. France, England, Germany, and Flanders, each in her turn commanded the pious host; but just as these countries were glorious in the East were they barren and empty at home. Whole districts of corn land and pasture lapsed again into moss and marsh. Whole countrysides were thinned of their hale and active men. A vast distress and indigence spread over Europe. Those were hard years for desolate women. Their spinning and broidery could not buy them bread, and bitter was the effort to live until their bread-winners returned. Even when the armies came back from Palestine there were many who did not return: many had died of strange Asiatic pestilences, many had not survived the long journey; the bones of some were bleached on the desert sand, and others whitened in the sea. And some of them had gained the crown which every pious soul then strove and yearned to win. They had fallen, as Mechtild of Magdeburg wished to fall, their heart's blood streaming under the feet of heathen. And when the thinned and feeble ranks of the survivors came to their own country, a very dreadful cry went up from all the destitute widows in Europe.

Cruel indeed was their condition. Some, truly,

sought for rest and quiet in the cloister; but in those days the cloister was death to the world. The charitable orders of Francis and Dominic were as yet undreamed of. Only the great meditative orders offered absolute renunciation and absolute seclusion. Timid and clinging hearts could not so utterly forego their world; many busy energetic spirits felt no vocation for the dreamy quiet of the cloistered nun. And for these the world was hard. They must beg the bread which their labour could very seldom earn. One dreadful trade indeed, which the desires of men leave ever open to the despair of women, one trade found many followers. But there were pure and holy women, and venerable women, and dying women, who could not live in sin. And there might be seen in every market-place miserable and hungry petitioners, crying, "For God's sake, give us bread; bread for the love of Christ!"

Swestrones Brod durch Got. Sisters of bread for the sake of God. The name often strikes us in later writing. The singular title has become familiar. For when we read of piteous uncloistered piety, and when we read of humble merit rebuking the sins of arrogant Churchmen, and in the account of strange mystical heresies, and in the lists of interdicts and burnings, we shall often meet in the monkish Latin of Germany and Flanders that outlandish phrase: we shall hear again of the *Swestrones Brod durch Got.*

II.

In the year 1180, there lived in Liege a certain kindly, stammering priest, known from his infirmity

as Lambert le Bègue. This man took pity on the destitute widows of his town. Despite the impediment in his speech, he was, as often happens, a man of a certain power and eloquence in preaching. His words, difficult to find, brought conviction when they came. This Lambert so moved the hearts of his hearers that gold and silver poured in on him, given to relieve such of the destitute women of Liege as were still of good and pious life. With the moneys thus collected, Lambert built a little square of cottages, with a church in the middle and a hospital, and at the side a cemetery. Here he housed these homeless widows, one or two in each little house, and then he drew up a half-monastic rule which was to guide their lives. The rule was very simple, quite informal: no vows, no great renunciation bound the *Swestrones Brod durch Got.* A certain time of the day was set apart for prayer and pious meditation; the other hours they spent in spinning or sewing, in keeping their houses clean, or they went as nurses in time of sickness into the homes of the townspeople. They were bidden to be obedient; and to be chaste so long as they remained of the sisterhood, but they might marry again at will with no disgrace. If rich women chose to join the new and unsanctioned guild, they might leave a portion of their riches to any heir they chose. Thus these women, though pious and sequestered, were still in the world and of the world; they helped in its troubles, and shared its afflictions, and at choice they might rejoin the conflict.

Soon we find the name *Swestrones Brod durch Got* set aside for the more usual title of Beguines, or

Beghines. Different authorities give different origins for this word. Some, too fantastic, have traced the name to St. Begge, a holy nun of the seventh century. Some have thought it was taken in memory of the founder, the charitable Lambert le Bègue. Others think that, even as the Mystics or Mutterers, the Lollards or Hummers, the Papelhards or Babblers, so the Beguines or Stammerers were thus nicknamed from their continual murmuring in prayer. This is plausible; but not so plausible as the suggestion of Dr. Mosheim and M. Auguste Jundt, who derive the word Beguine from the Flemish verb *beggen*, to beg. For we know that these pious women had been veritable beggars; and beggars should they again become.

With surprising swiftness the new order spread through the Netherlands and into France and Germany. Every town had its surplus of homeless and pious widows, and also its little quota of women who wished to spend their lives in doing good, but had no vocation for the cloister. The Beguinage, as it was called, became a home and refuge to either class. Before 1250 there were Beguines, or Begging Sisters, at Tirlemont, Valenciennes, Douai, Ghent, Louvain, and Antwerp in Flanders; at all the principal towns in France, especially at Cambray, where they numbered over a thousand; at Bâle and Berne in Switzerland; at Lübeck, Hamburg, Magdeburg, and many towns in Germany, with two thousand Beguines at Cologne and numerous beguinages in the pious town of Strasburg.

So the order spread, within the memory of a man.

Lambert may have lived to see a beguinage in every great town within his ken; but we hear no more of him. The Beguines are no longer for Liege, but for all the world. Each city possessed its quiet congregation; and at any sick-bed you might meet a woman clad in a simple smock and a great veil-like mantle, who lived only to pray and to do deeds of mercy. They were very pious, these uncloistered sisters of the poor. Ignorant women who had known the utmost perils of life and death, their fervour was warmer, fonder, more illiterate than the devotion of nuns; they prayed ever as being lately saved from disgrace and ruin and starvation. Their quiet, unutterable piety became a proverb, almost a reproach; much as, within our memories, the unctuous piety of Methodists was held in England. When the child Elizabeth of Hungary fasted and saw visions in the Wartburg, the Princess Agnes, her worldly sister-in-law, could find no more cruel taunt than this: "Think you my brother will marry such a Beguine?" This is in 1213, only eight-and-thirty years since Lambert built the first asylum for the destitute widows of Liege.

III.

The success of the Beguines had made them an example; the idea of a guild of pious uncloistered workers in the world had seized the imagination of Europe. Before St. Francis and St. Dominic instituted the mendicant orders, there had silently grown up in every town of the Netherlands a spirit of fraternity, not imposed by any rule, but the natural

impulse of a people. The weavers seated all day long alone at their rattling looms, the armourers beating out their thoughts in iron, the cross-legged tailors and busy cobblers thinking and stitching together—these men silent, pious, thoughtful, joined themselves in a fraternity modelled on that of the Beguines. They were called the Weaving Brothers. Bound by no vows and fettered by no rule, they still lived the worldly life and plied their trade for hire. Only in their leisure they met together and prayed and dreamed and thought. Unlettered men, with warm undisciplined fancies, they set themselves to solve the greatest mysteries of earth and heaven. Sometimes, in their sublime and dangerous audacity, they stumbled on a truth; more often they wandered far afield, led by the will-o'-the-wisp of their own unguided thoughts. In the long busy hours of weaving and stitching they found strange answers to the problems of human destiny, and, in their leisure, breathless and eager, discussed these theories as other men discussed their chance of better wage. Such were the founders of the great fraternity of Fratres Textores, or Beghards as in later years the people more generally called them. And their philosophy is so strangely abstract and remote that we could not explain it, did we not know that from time to time some secular priest or wealthy and pious laymen joined the humble fraternity. And the priest would bring, to their store of dim wonderings, the the Alexandrian theories of the pseudo-Dionysius, then, in all the monasteries of Christendom, deemed the very corner-stone of sacred philosophy. We can

imagine how eagerly these simple folk would seize the hallowed fragments of Erigena and of the Areopagite, and how they would treasure them as holy secrets in the depth of their tender and mystical souls. We know that now and then a consecrated priest would join the unsanctioned but pious order of the Beghards; it is no great stretch of fancy to suppose that from time to time, some Crusader, fresh from the East, would bring them his memory of Eastern theories; that some scholar would add a line from Avicenna or Averroes. Through some channel, it is evident, the Beghards received the last feeble stream of Alexandrian theory. Their vague, idealistic pantheism is but an echo of Plotinus and his school. From the monasteries, from the Arabian commentators on Aristotle, or directly from the East, these fragments of neoplatonist philosophy must have reached them; and out of them there should be evolved, first of all, the great metaphysical heresies of the Middle Ages; and, later on, the habit of mind that should produce the German Reformation.

IV.

While the Beghards and the Beguines were slowly, imperceptibly nearing the great abyss of heresy, the creation of two new orders at Rome insidiously took from them the greater part of their prestige. Until the Franciscans and Dominicans obtained the sanction of the Pope, the beguinage had seemed the natural mean between the life of the cloister and the life of the world. But the new charitable orders had all the activity, the beneficence of the Beguines, and

therewith the friendship and protection of Rome. For some time longer the Beguines flourished, still orthodox and reputable; but the order had received its death-blow on the day when Francis and Dominic obtained the Papal sanction for their Tertiary Orders of Penitence.

The tertiary orders of Dominic and Francis were a new departure from the exclusive theories of Roman monasticism. They were invented for men and women of holy life, married and still living in the world, who wished for some nearer association with the Church than belongs to the ordinary member of a congregation. They took their part in worldly joys and sorrows, triumphs and failures; but they prayed longer than other worldly folk, did more good works, looked more for heaven. The institution of these orders was a wide breach in the barrier which divides the cloister from the world, the sacred from the profane. They were, in fact, as the reader has perceived, merely an hierarchic version of those fraternities which the unconsecrated poor had made among themselves: Beguines and Beghards protected by the Church.

Thus the idea of the secular beguinage was transformed into a sacred thing. The example of the Beguines had been followed by the Church, who, in consecrating these new orders, made an immense reform in the old exclusive monastic ideal, a tremendous concession to the new democratic spirit inspiring all men. Hitherto the cloister had been a refuge and asylum from the noisy nations without. It had been as an ark, floating over the stormy waters, offering

safety indeed to those inside it, yet not concerned with the clamorous multitude that drowned and struggled beyond it in the increasing flood. The aim of Francis and of Dominic was to quit this aloof and lofty shelter, to go and reprove the erring and rescue the ignorant, to be the friend and brother of sinners and publicans, of Magdalens and lepers, to revert, in fact, to the old democratic ideal of the Christian Church. They were to be poor among the poor, armed only with the armour of faith. They were to be in the world the heralds of God. The sisters of the orders were to be humble women, the brothers mendicant friars. At first they took no more from the world than the wandering Beguines took in later days—only water, bread, and a garment. But this strict rule of absolute poverty was soon removed, and the Dominicans, at all events, were never destitute.

Each order had its different mission. The Dominicans, the preaching brothers, should persuade the hard of heart, strengthen the failing, console the desolate, warn the erring, and exterminate the heretic. Yet, singularly enough, this most orthodox order, these watch-dogs of the Lord, were to become in Germany a centre of mystical heresies. The order of St. Francis, the Lesser Brothers, had a more tender and ecstatic ideal. They went begging through the world, tending the sick, loving the helpless, preaching to the birds and the fishes, full of a quaint compassionate unworldliness, a holy folly. There were few hearts so hard that, though unshaken by the storms of Dominic, they did not melt before the sweet Franciscan sanctity. And so the two

orders traversed the world, twin forces and voices of pity. But the chivalrous and militant pity of Dominic, eager to avenge the outraged Christ continually crucified by infidels, too often took the form of wrath and burnings, while Francis loved the erring with a simple human pity. In return the world bestowed, and still bestows, upon him something of the wondering compassionate reverence which Eastern nations give to the Pure Fool, the man unsoiled by the wisdom of the world and still wrapped round with the simplicity of God. Between them, the two orders were to divide the Christian world. Sanctioned in the same year and under the same hospitable rule of Augustine, they went out triumphantly upon their different missions. Inspired, it is most probable, by the example of the Beguines, they would soon absorb the secular order into their mighty forces. And the real decline of Beguinism begins, not in 1250, when first the secular fraternities became conspicuous for heresy, but on that day of the year 1216 when the learned Dominic and the visionary Francis met and embraced each other in the streets of Rome.

V.

At first the external position of the Beguines and the Beghards appeared in no danger and no disadvantage. Their fraternity had always been a secular fraternity; their condition of pious laymen was one which offered sanctity with independence. The beguinages still thrived and multiplied. In the Low Countries especially, and in Cambray, Strasburg,

and Cologne,—places where mysticism has ever been dear, and ecclesiastical authority never a welcome yoke—Beguinism grew apace. But there is no doubt that one great cause which for thirty years averted the ruin of the secular fraternities was the presence in their midst of one of the most remarkable women of her century; a woman who, to the Beguines, was all that St. Elizabeth was to the Franciscans, or that Catherine of Siena should become to the order of St. Dominic. This gifted and singular creature was the prophetess Mechtild of Magdeburg.

We do not know the name of the castle where, in the year 1212, Mechtild of Magdeburg was born. It cannot have been very far from the city which was to be her refuge, and whose name she bears. The title of her father is also lost; but it is certain she came of noble and courtly stock. Her family were probably religious people, for we know that her brother Baldwin became one of the Dominicans of Halle.

Mechtild was, as she herself recalls, the dearest of her parents' children; and these courtly and pious Thuringian nobles seem to have been as proud as they were fond of their little daughter. She received a liberal education. Her book on the flowing light of Godhead is written with an energy, sweetness, and variety of style strongly in contrast with the Gertrudenbuch and the Mechtildenbuch of Helfta. The music of her verse proves her familiar with the lyrics of the Minnesingers. They may no doubt have visited her father's castle. But the little Mechtild did not dream of poetry and of knights-at-arms. It

was later that she would deplore the poor vain minstrels who in hell weep more tears than there are waters in the sea.* Her thoughts in childhood were all for the saints in heaven. When she was twelve years old, the little girl was (as she records it) visited by the Holy Spirit; and from that moment she desired to quit the world.

It was a moment of intense spiritual exaltation, this year 1224. Close at hand in the Wartburg the seventeen-year-old Landgravine Elizabeth was exciting the wonder of her people by her pieties and sweet austerities. The bread miraculously turned into heavenly roses, the leper whom she tended transformed into the shining Christ, the stories of her visions and her scourgings would certainly be familiar to the little Mechtild. The Emperor Frederic II. was already collecting his nobles for his ill-starred and heretic crusade. On Monte Laverna, in this very year, St. Francis received the stigmata. Blanche of Castile and the child St. Louis were ruling Paris as King Arthur might have ruled his court at Camelot, by the authority of love and gentleness. At the same time the ghastly prevalence of leprosy and pestilence, of war and hideous famine, made the

* "Der viel arme Spielmann der mit hohem Můthe sündliche Eitelkeit machen kann, der weint in der Hölle mehr Thränen denn alles Wassers ist in dem Meer." I like to give the reader a line of Mechtild's book—from what I have read of it, that is to say, in the pages of Herr Preger and elsewhere—to show him the musical lilt of her style, the emotional charm (foreshadowing Heinrich Suso), and a certain easy lightness of heart I remember in no other mystical book, except in the exquisite Fioretti di San Francesco.

world as dreadful as heaven was desirable. Those who recall the condition of Eisenach, as revealed by the life of St. Elizabeth, may imagine the sights of human suffering which little Mechtild must have encountered every day. And close by, in the vast woods of Prussia, dwelt heathen folk who knew of nothing better than this cruel world. In that very year some of the crusader knights had set out to conquer that pagan kingdom. Thus with on one hand holy Thuringia and with heathen Prussia on the other, with war, famine, and pestilence frequent petitioners at her gates, it is not surprising that the little Mechtild shared the spiritual fervours of her time, and longed to give herself to Heaven.

But she did not, like Gertrude and Mechtild of Hackeborn, enter a convent in her infancy. Most likely she yielded to the entreaties of her family, "of whom she was ever the dearest." Year after year passed on, and Mechtild still dwelt in her father's castle. Yet, after that one childish moment of ecstacy, the sweetness and honour of the world were to her as vain and perishable things. And still she was not visited again with trance or vision. She was no dreamer, this eager Mechtild, but a vigorous and healthy girl, in the flower of her beautiful and lusty youth, alert, passionate, with a mind awake to all the questions and interest of the world around her. Such a nature is not by instinct a mystical nature; but the strange contagion of the time had touched her, and worked slowly through her innermost being. Stronger and stronger grew the strenuous unworldly prompting: "*without sin, to be disgraced before the world.*"

For eleven years the desire waxed and strengthened; for eleven years did Mechtild combat this desire. Daily it grew more impelling, more subduing. At last, in the year 1235, the year of the canonization of Elizabeth, when Mechtild was twenty-three years old, she secretly left her father's house, and fled to Magdeburg. She left all behind her—brothers and sisters, father and mother, "of whom she was the dearest," and the courtly honourable life, and the quiet happiness of love and safety. *Frau Minne, ihr habt mir benommen weltlich Ehre und allen weltlichen Reichthum!* Everything indeed she left, to follow the goading impulse of Sacred Love.

When she reached the strange city, when she had left far behind her the distant home where even now her kinsmen would wonder, and miss her, and make a search, when the night fell on her in Magdeburg, Mechtild desired a shelter. Weary with her flight, she resolved to ask some nunnery to lend her its asylum. Within those holy walls she could more truly yield herself to God.

She knocked at a convent door, and begged for shelter, saying she desired to become a nun. But the quiet sisters distrusted this beautiful, travel-stained young woman of three-and-twenty, without means, or friends, or reference, alone at night in the turbulent city streets—this girl who, by her own confession, had fled her father's house. Soon those doors were closed against her. There were, however, many convents in a great archiepiscopal city such as Magdeburg. To convent after convent went the despairing girl, finding at each, no doubt, rest for the

limbs and food for the body, but in none of all of them a home. For no religious house would admit this unfriended and suspicious creature into its pure community. When the last doors had closed upon her, Mechtild stood in the street, alone in Magdeburg. It must have come upon her then, I think, that at last her great desire was granted—*Without sin, she was disgraced before the world.*

When Mechtild left her parents' castle, she had chosen Magdeburg to be her hiding-place, because in that town there lived a friend of her family. She had thought to stay her heart upon the thought of this unvisited friend, who might be her last resource in case of extremity. But now the need was felt, Mechtild did not seek him. He would, she knew, endeavour to persuade her from the path that she had chosen, and Mechtild was in need of all her courage.

So, unfriended, alone, she stood in the streets of Magdeburg. Then she bethought her of another shelter, humble indeed, but safe. And she had left home only to be humbled. What humiliation would there have been in entering, like the dear St. Elizabeth, the holy order of St. Francis? Or what abasement had she, like her brother, embraced the rule of Dominic, "dearest to me," she avers, "of all the saints"? Here there was no spiritual sacrifice. And what sacrifice of life, of social habit, of esteem could she have made had she entered one of the great Cistercian or Benedictine convents, where the nobles of Saxony and Thuringia were proud to send their daughters? Mechtild was glad that they had re-

jected her; it seemed to her that at last, pure of pride, free of weak desire, she saw her own will made plain and the directing will of God.

She moved now; she knew what to do and where to go; she was no longer unguided and alone. She went to the beguinage, the home of mendicant widows, the almshouse of the holy poor who gave themselves to God. At that door, which debarred no one from the outer world, Mechtild knocked. A poor woman opened to her, clad in a plain smock and a great mantle covering head and shoulders. Such another gown and cloak was lying by, ready for the welcome Mechtild. She entered the house.

That night Mechtild stood in her little cell. It was much like any convent cell; but it was without a convent's restrictions or its privileges. Mechtild might quit those walls this year, next year, any year. She might marry and have children. She had, after all, offered up no sacrifice of her own body; she was not dead to the world, but was to live and labour in it more nearly now than in her father's castle. No great barrier should stand henceforth between her soul and sin. The battle was not over; it was but just begun.

Far easier had been the greater sacrifice, done once and done for ever! Far more peaceful the quiet nunnery, hallowed to rapture and seclusion! Mechtild was now the servant only, and not the bride of Christ. She was a Beguine, not a nun. The accomplished daughter of nobles, she was the companion of the destitute and lowly. It was better thus, better to be lowly and despised, even as Christ

was despised. All these thoughts of dismay, rapture, weariness, and exaltation, rushed and clashed through the tired breast of Mechtild. Then, for a second time, the trance crept over her, and she sank unconscious into the ever-present arms of God.

Then, in a vision, Mechtild saw how henceforward her life should be doubly glorious and doubly beset with peril. For she beheld the angel and the devil, who to this moment had been permitted to guide her and assail her, each miraculously changed into twain. Now at her right there stood a cherub, with gifts and holy wisdom on his azure wings, and a seraph bearing her a heart of love. But on the left two devils watched her—two devils who, in all times, have lain in wait for the mystic and the solitary visionary. And the name of the one was Vain-Glory, and that of the other Vain-Desire.

VI.

From the night of that vision begins the career of Mechtild and the history of her visions and her prophecies. At first, indeed, occupied in conquering her strong and lusty youth, the visions of Mechtild of Magdeburg are little different from those of any convent saint. Angels and devils, the beautiful manhood of our Lord, fragments from the Song of Solomon, the rapture of the Spiritual Nuptials—such are the inevitable themes. But this woman, we feel, is no mere Gertrude or Mechtild of Hackeborn. The whole world interests her, and the destinies of the world. In reading the book in which she wrote her visions, the book of the flowing light of Godhead,

we soon pass over this initial stage to a second and wider phase.

"Ich habe gesehen ein Stat;
Ihr Name ist die ewige Hass."

These pregnant words begin Mechtild's "Vision of Hell." The plan of this great vision, which beholds, built in succeeding and widening terraces, the habitations of sinners, with fire and darkness, stench and cold, and pain in the bottommost pit, no less than the scheme of the poem, which lashes many a prevalent sin of the Church, both alike recall a far greater poet yet unborn, one who should also explore the depths of hell and the heights of heaven, one who should accept as his guide towards Paradise a certain mysterious Matilda,

"Cantando come donna innamorata,"

in whom the learned Herr Preger has recognized our earnest minstrel of heaven, the loving and singing Mechtild of Magdeburg.

The form of Mechtild's visions did not make her popular among the churchmen of her city. The people caught up the lilting, dancing measures of her songs. The pious sang her visions. And girls, to whom a nun had ever seemed a cold and sacred being, could understand the happy verses of the fearless love of God, in which Mechtild claims for herself an impulse as natural, as irresistible, as any maiden's love of her betrothed:—

"Das ist eine kindische Liebe,
Dass man Kinder saüge und wiege;
Ich bin eine vollgewachsene Braut,
Ich will gehen nach meinem Traut.

"Ich stürbe gerne von Minnen
Seine Augen in meine Augen,
Sein Herz in mein Herze,
Sein Seele in meine Seele
Umfangen und umschlossen.

"Der Fisch mag in dem Wasser nicht ertrinken,
Der Vogel in den Lüften nicht versinken,
Das Gold mag in dem Feuer nicht verderben;
Wie möchte ich denn meiner Natur widerstehn?"

In the convents of Helfta and Quedlinburg these songs spread and furthered the great renown of Mechtild. Heinrich von Halle, the famous Dominican, went to see her, and became her friend. But the secular priests did not love her, this Beguine reformer, this new unsanctioned Abbess Hildegard, who saw so clearly and bewailed so explicitly the many corruptions which had crept upon the Church even in that age of faith, even in the century of St. Francis and St. Dominic, of King Louis and Elizabeth of Hungary. Some of these secular priests tried to burn her book; thereupon Mechtild saw a vision and heard the voice of God crying aloud: "*Lieb' meine, betrübe dich nicht zu sehr, die Wahrheit mag niemand verbrennen.*"

Profound and touching phrase, motto of all martyrs and of every cause: No one can burn the Truth! Had the world but learned by heart this one poignant sentence, uttered in the very age which began the persecution of heretics, how many wars, deaths, angers, cruelties, centuries of remorse and hatred had not the world been spared! All honour to this woman, who, six centuries ago, perceived how vain it

is to hunt, slay, burn, exterminate an idea. This sentence should be immortal.

Mechtild continued to speak what seemed to her the most necessary truth. "Pope and priests," she cries, "are going the road to hell. Unless they quit their sensuality, their spiritual negligence, their temporal greed, fearful disasters will overwhelm them." "In this book," she says, "I write with my heart's blood." She is no unfilial antagonist threatening the power of Rome, but a daughter striving to lead her parent back into the holy way. She has a vision, and sees perverted Christendom lying, "like an impure virgin," far from the throne of God. She takes it in the arms of her soul, and strives to lift it nearer. "Leave hold!" cries the tremendous voice of God; "she is too great a weight for thee." And Mechtild looks up and smiles. "Eia, my Lord!" she cries; "I will carry her to Thy feet with Thine own arms that Thou didst outspread upon the cross for her!"

Such is the aim of Mechtild: to bring the overpowerful and worldly Roman hierarchy back to the primitive and democratic ideal of Christianity. She has the courage of her intention, and shrinks not from rebuking error, however high its place. She, the Beguine, the sister of the poor, wrote to the Dean of Magdeburg censuring the notoriously idle and voluptuous lives of his clergy. "Let him sleep upon straw, and his canons take and eat it for their fodder!" Perhaps it is not wonderful the clergy of Magdeburg did not love the prophetess.

Also she wrote to the Pope, to Clement IV., whose

tolerance of the murder of Conradine had lost him many loyal German hearts, whose lax and irreligious court was Gomorrah in the sight of Mechtild. And these priests and prelates, this all-powerful Pope, if they do not reform and obey, yet listen they humbly to the words of this unsanctioned nun, this secular sister of Magdeburg.

Never again have the Beguines attained so fine, so pure an eminence. They are indeed still poor, still lowly, still unrecognized, still Beguines. But these negations are become their glory and their distinction. Which life is nearer the ideal life of Christendom, the life of a great prelate or the life of the Beguine? The priests hear and listen, for the moment abashed because of their splendour and their power. The Beguines are poor, unlettered, unprotected; but they are nearer the simplicity of God, that *reine heilige Einfalt* which the Beguine Mechtild well knows how to praise.

So for thirty years Mechtild preached against error and prophesied punishment, sang of the love of God, and saw visions of a hell where wicked ecclesiastics burn for persecuting the innocent. For thirty years she lived, in her beguinage, the strenuous, earnest, indignant life of the reforming seer, the life of Dante, the life of Savonarola. And then the vigorous frame wore out. In her fifty-third year even Mechtild saw that an end must be put to this unrelaxed endeavour. Fain would she have gone, like Jutta von Schönhausen, into the wild woods to preach to the heathen Prussians. But this could not be; the body was too weak. She retired to the

Cistercian cloister of Helfta, the home of the great Abbess Gertrude, and of her sister, the younger Mechtild. But even there she did not rest. "What shall I do in a cloister—I?" she demanded in agonized prayers. "Teach and enlighten," answered a heavenly voice. And so for twelve years longer Mechtild lives, and teaches the cloister of the great world beyond its walls, and finishes her book on the flowing light of Godhead, till, honoured and loved by all, she ends her eventful life in the year 1277.

VII.

Reine, Heilige Einfalt; such is the phrase in which Mechtild praised her God. *Pure, holy simplicity;* it is the praise of the Beguines and the Mystics, the beginning of pantheism. But Mechtild is no pantheist; she strenuously believes in the personality of the soul, the reality of Christ, the existence of the world, and in heaven and in hell. She is an orthodox and Catholic Christian; yet she is stirred by the spirit of her time.

"God," she says, "is pure simplicity; out of the eternal spring of Deity I flowed, and all things flow, and thence shall all return." These earnest phrases of mystical pantheism escape her lips, though they do not touch her heart. She does not consider all that they imply; for if all things, having arisen in the Deity, flow back to their source when life is over, how can Evil have a real existence, how can sinners be punished for ever in the city of Eternal Hate? If God be the one thing real, there is no evil and there is no hell. If all souls released from existence return

to that pure and holy simplicity, there is no personal immortality either for bliss or for bale. Mechtild did not perceive the bearings and the consequences of her phrase; but the Beguines pushed the meaning to its term. The pantheism of Alexandria, the pantheism of the suppressed Almarician heresy, stirred and quickened in the thoughts of pious and schismatic Beguinism. And pantheism, with its two extremes of austerity and sensualism, increased and deepened in the sect.

Mystical pantheism, which asserts that God is all and matter nothing; the spirit all, the body but a transitory veil; thought and mind eternal, sense and sensuous pleasure of no account for evil or for good; this doctrine is capable of two interpretations. It may be the religion of Plotinus and pure souls. It may absolutely ignore the body; it may mean the life of the mind and the soul carried always to the highest possible pitch. Or it may be, and too often is, the excuse of the basest sensualism. There is a page of psychology in the changed meaning of the word Libertine. Since, neither for sin nor for sanctity, the body can affect the soul, since sensuous pleasures are quite independent of the spiritual existence, the lower pantheism may excuse debauch as a permissible relaxation not affecting the spirit. And this is what it generally does come to mean among communities of undisciplined and ill-educated enthusiasts.

This is gradually what it came to mean among the Beghards and the Beguines, or at least among a large proportion of them. Some, indeed, praying to the

Pure and Holy Simplicity, endeavoured to live only in the pureness of their souls, and thus to become one with that inspiring spirit. Such were the Beguines of Strasburg. And a section of the secular communities, dreading these continual inroads of heresy, entrenched themselves in Catholic orthodoxy, and enlisted in the third orders of Dominic and Francis. But the great remainder was absorbed by a vague mystical pantheism, which, placing the soul too high to be affected by the matters of the flesh, made this opinion an excuse for a complete independence of the moral law.

Towards the close of the life of Mechtild the prestige of Beguinism had seriously declined. Innocent IV. and Urban IV. had taken the secular order under their peculiar protection, but in 1274, Pope Gregory X. renewed against it the sentence of the Lateran Council and declared the Beguines unrecognized by Rome. Following this official condemnation, the blame of lesser men came thick and fast; and by the end of the thirteenth century the secular fraternities were popular only among the poor, only among the laymen and the people. They were discredited and heretic among the clergy.

For thirty years before the sentence of Gregory complaints of the Beguines and the Beghards had been sent to Rome from the prelates of Germany and Flanders. The two demons foreseen by Mechtild, the demon of vainglory and the demon of sensual sin, had entered in among these quiet homes of prayer. Already in 1244 there were scandals among the younger sisters, and the Archbishop of Mayence

decreed that the beguinages of his diocese should receive no women under forty years of age. Already in 1250 Albertus Magnus at Cologne had met with heretic Beghards, men whose vague pantheism was to grow and spread among the order, until all distinction should be lost between the Beghards and the heretic Brothers of the Free Spirit. Already they had returned to their old habits, wandering through the streets, ragged as an Eastern fakir, praying aloud and begging of the passers-by: "Bread, for the sake of God!" Too much ignorance with too much liberty had gone far to destroy and pervert the real uses of the order. The great moment of Beguinism, its time of independent poverty and secular piety, the time of Mechtild of Magdeburg, was past and gone. The third stage of vagabondage and heresy had begun.

That period, we must remember, was one which, in the Church itself, was a period of corruption and of schism. There is no charge brought against the secular order, which might not equally be brought against the regular monks and nuns. The long wave of pantheism which preceded the Reformation engulfed the ignorant Beguines in a hundred perversions of an idea ill explained, misunderstood; but that same wave overwhelmed Master Eckhart and the Dominican Mystics. Only the Roman Church, jealous of the unrecognized order, was swift to hear the low voice of the Beguines murmuring, "*God is all that exists.*"

This one phrase caught, repeated, whispered, half understood, misunderstood, often not understood at all, spread with the swiftness and authority of gospel

among the Beghards and the Beguines of Europe. Soon in Italy, the vagrant sect of Apostolici, the followers of Segarelli, and the Franciscan Fraticelli in France, and the Beghards and Beguines of Northern Europe, all were murmuring together that one phrase, that key-word of pantheism, "*Deus est formaliter omne.*"

It is not easy to prevent the growth of an idea among a community so widely spread, so constantly changing. Segarelli was burned at Parma all in vain. His doctrines had percolated everywhere. Inspired by the example of the mendicant orders, many of the Beghards and Beguines had returned to the vagabond life. Pious vagrants all in rags, staffless, scripless, they wandered through the country from beguinage to beguinage, begging for their food along the way. It was a change indeed from the early habits of the order, so busy, so hard at work, so pious, so responsible. But in the hearts of the lowest classes the secular fraternities were never so dear, never so much revered as now. In 1295 the Council of Mayence forbad them to wander through the streets, exciting public pity and crying, "*Brod durch Got!*" and Guillaume de St. Amour lamented that the people were blinded by the rags, the hunger, the false piety of these vagrants. This, of course, is the view of churchmen who did not entertain such strict opinions with regard to the merit of Franciscan mendicants. Indeed, much of the ill-favour with which the Church regarded the wandering Beghards and Beguines of these later days may be set down to a jealousy lest the piety of these irregular brothers

should defraud the begging orders of their due. From one cause or another the thunders of the Church began to fall heavy and frequent upon the secular fraternities.

In 1310 the Council of Treves disposed of the pretensions of the Beghards in what appeared a sufficiently decisive manner. The Beghards were called an imaginary congregation, idle fugitives from honest labour, false interpreters of Scripture, mendicant vagabonds unsanctioned by the Church.

In 1311, at the Council of Vienna, Clement V. decreed the total suppression of Beguinism. But the sentence was severe. Too many innocent must suffer with the guilty. In the same year the Pope revoked his sentence, and allowed the orthodox and irreproachable among the Beguines to live "according to the inspiration of the Lord."

But from this time Beguinism as an institution was at an end. The "orthodox and irreproachable" were Beghards and Beguines who had joined the Tertiary Order of Francis or of Dominic. The secular order was no longer secular; the aim of the Beguines was falsified and changed.

VIII.

In the year 1328 nearly fifty Libertines or Brothers of the Free Spirit were publicly burned at Cologne.

The persecution of the wandering Beguines and Beghards had thoroughly begun. In the history of the time, in the chronicles of any town along the Rhine or in the Low Countries, we may meet the dolorous little entry: On such a day so many Beg-

hards were burned or imprisoned in perpetual *In pace*. A special German Inquisition was instituted against them.

It is the old cruel war of intolerance and heresy, the vain and shameful struggle with which six centuries are full. But there was here a more than usual excuse for the excessive severity of Rome. Europe was fast being ruined by these mendicant wanderers. Begging friars of St. Francis, Carmelites, Dominicans, numerous new orders which flourished for a while, and died, and are forgotten, all these flooded the country with pious vagrants for whom the impoverished laymen must provide. And in addition to all these orthodox idlers, there was now a countless horde of wandering Beghards, no less ignorant, no less incapable of warfare or of labour, and, in addition, pestilent heretics. Such was the view of the Church.

Fifty years before, Gregory X. had tried to reduce "the unbridled throng of mendicants, who are a heavy burden alike on Church and people;" but his efforts had been in vain. The poor of every nation and of every time are quick to ascribe piety to those who, ragged and homeless, assert that the life to come shall repay them for their sufferings here. Half starved, down-trodden, little better than slaves, the peasants of Germany would share their squalid meal thankfully with the wandering friar. It was little less than sacrilege to refuse a portion to the holy man. This was the natural attitude of the people. They gave, and did not complain.

They gave, and the friars took, and the Beghards

took, and still the cry was "Give." The Fratricelli, Apostolici, Beghards, Beguines, Brothers of the Free Spirit, overran the whole of Europe. These all must be fed no less than the orthodox fraternities. And year by year the number of the mendicants increased. The careless wandering life without responsibility or consequence, the absence of ties or of toil, the prestige in idleness, attracted the vagabond and lazy. And many of the pious really believed it the noblest human life. Since the idea of Divinity was simplicity, mere simplicity, then the more the saint was simplified and the less heed he took for apparel or for food the nearer he was to heaven. These men and women, strange descendants of the spinning sisters and the Fratres Textores, were like the lilies of the field inasmuch as they toiled not, neither did they spin. They thus fulfilled the popular ideal of piety. Year by year labour and forethought grew more discredited, as it was discovered that, if you did not feed yourself, a more worldly person would always feed you; until in 1317 we read in the sentences collected by Johann von Ochsenstein that no exterior motive, *not even the desire of the kingdom of heaven, should tempt a good man towards activity.*

It was in vain for even the Pope to preach, for Guillaume de St. Amour to attack all mendicants alike, for councils and bishops to thunder against the indolence, the mendicancy, the lax morals and loose opinions of these men. The mendicants grew more and more. The nations groaned under the holy burden. Then, about 1310, unable to contain her displeasure any longer, the Church bursts forth into

interdicts and persecution. Fifty Beghards are burned at Cologne. At Magdeburg some Beguines are cast into prison. At Strasburg, at Constance, at Mayence, the Beguines and Beghards are punished unless converted within three days. It is war to the knife against the wandering heretics.

IX.

Under the pressure of a displeasure so severe, the greater number of the Beghards and Beguines accepted the rule of the tertiary orders. The mother became submissive to her children. The larger party of the fraternity, including all the Flemish beguinages, accepted the Franciscan rule; but the Beghards and Beguines of Strasburg, the most suspected of any, joined the Tertiary Order of Dominic. Thus the heresy of Beguinism appeared for a while overcome.

But at the same time a strange mystical pantheistic tendency became noticeable in many sermons and lessons of the Church herself. All this multitude of heretic Beguines, suddenly made orthodox within three days, all this vast accession of vague Almarician piety was not without an influence on the conquering faith. Among the Dominicans of Strasburg the mystical bent grew more decided year by year. These much-admired doctors and magisters were lights of the Church, men of influence and learning; but the mysticism which was orthodox in them was really identical with the neoplatonist theories of the Beghards. And, indeed, these men, — Eckhart, Tauler, Rulmann Merswin—went further in the way

of pantheism than the heretic brotherhood had gone before.

It is impossible to exterminate an idea. It must live its course, grow, flourish, and die. Be it wise or foolish, orthodox or heterodox, let it but have some new aspect of truth in it; let it but be fresh, profound, and striking; let it be truly and verily an idea: it will live its life before it dies its natural death.

Thus the idea of the Beguines, arbitrarily suppressed, yet flourished only the more. Like a brier budded on a rose tree, it brought out its wild and fragile blossoms among the ordered beauties of the ecclesiastical garden. In the great Dominican mystics of Strasburg the central thought of heretic Beguinism ("*Deus est omnia*") flourished more completely than before.

God is all: the world is nothing. This is what the mystics of Strasburg and the mystics of the Netherlands now began to preach to the world.

X.

From the year 1312 until 1320 Master Eckhart, the great Dominican preacher, was living in Strasburg. His deep and original mind, which so vastly was to influence the speculation of his time, was now itself brought under the influence of Beguinism. From 1312 to 1317 he preached and visited in the Dominican beguinages of Strasburg. Always a mystic and a neoplatonist, before that date he was not suspected of hersey. The theories of the Dominican Beguines agreed perfectly with the convictions of this singular being, who preached in accents

of strenuous sincerity the doctrine of the unreality of matter.

Among the Beguines of his diocese was one whom Eckhart adopted to be his spiritual daughter. But the relation of the Beguine Sister Katrei to the great Vicar-general of the Dominican order was scarcely that attitude of submission which we expect from a penitent to her confessor. She leads him on to new audacities of faith, suggests new penances, refuses all restraint. She shows him how an earnest nature can reduce to practice his special tenet that the world is nothing, that God alone exists.

Katrei was the daughter of worthy Strasburg townspeople. Not necessity, but an enthusiasm for self-humiliation drove her to the beguinage. Ever in doubt of her own salvation, she multiplied her fasts and penances till even her director beseeched her to take some pity on her starved and shattered body. But Katrei would not be persuaded; not yet, she declared, was the old Adam slain in her; not yet was she "dead all through." As Mechtild of Magdeburg is the great active type of the order, so Katrei represents the passive Beguinism. She had no reforming zeal; she belonged to the later school, to those who said: "Not even the desire of the kingdom of heaven must tempt a good man towards activity."

To free herself from the world and the claims of the world, to leave behind the flesh and all the needs and desires of the flesh, this was the overmastering preoccupation of Swester Katrei. She left the sheltering beguinage, the faces too familiar to be easily forgotten,

the neighbourhood of father and of mother, and set out alone upon the wandering Beguine's life. With her she took neither staff nor scrip. "All that I ask of the world," she said, "is a spring, a crust, and a garment" (*brunnen, brod, und ein rock*). So for many months she went, absorbed in her own soul, forgetting men and women, earthly pleasure, earthly love, and earthly duty, and at last returned to Strasburg to be known by no one there.

She was not yet satisfied. Her ideal was not yet reached. "Not yet," she persisted, "am I dead all through." "Nay," answered the confessor (behind whose cowl we see the face of Eckhart), "not so long as thou rememberest who was thy father and who thy mother; not so long as thou shalt care if thy priest refused to confess thee or absolve thee; not so long as it shall disturb thee if thou mayest not taste the body of God; not so long as thou shalt grieve when none will shelter thee, and all despise thee; not until then, my sister, canst thou know the real death unto self." Then again, Katrei retired into the wilderness, and for a long time she wandered to and fro across the face of the earth. When she returned she was strangely changed; even her confessor did not know her. At last, her cataleptic trances growing daily longer and more profound, she being permanently raised into a strange hysteric insensibility to pain or hunger, she lay the whole day long without food or drink or movement in a corner of the great cathedral. Now she was dead to outer things. "Now," she said, "I am God." Her father and her mother came and cried to her, half abashed at her

holiness, half agonized at her condition. But Katrei did not know them now. She no longer recognized what she looked upon; the world and all within it was a blank to her.

At last, one day, the trance deepened; she ceased to breathe. Some people of the church, thinking her dead, took her away to bury her. But when they returned to the church with Katrei on the bier, her confessor, approaching, perceived she was not really dead. "Art thou satisfied?" he demanded; and she answered, "I am satisfied at last." She would have let them bury her.

Quietism can go no further than this. When this singular woman died, between 1312 and 1320, though the Church already began to censure the mystical errors of Beguinism, yet her piety was deemed so great that Meister Eckhart wrote a memoir of her life as an example and an exhortation to the pious. She is the saint of the later Beguinism, even as the vigorous Mechtild of Magdeburg is the patron of the older style.

XI.

But sister Katrei had too many followers, and gradually the sense of the religious world revolted from this numb and dead ideal. Already, in the writings of Suso (1335), of Ruysbrock, and Rulmann Merswin, men whose idealist mysticism was little different from the Beguine heresy, the quietism of these "false freemen" is utterly condemned. Suso, in his Book of Truth, recounts how he met on a journey one of these wandering Beghards, who, to all

his questions, responded much as Parsifal responds to Gurnemanz. Whence he came and whither going, the wanderer does not know. He is called the Nameless Savage. He is Nothing abysmed in the Divine Nothingness. Without will or desire he obeys his natural instincts, since any conflict with them would destroy the quiet of his soul. Such is the latest type of the secular brotherhood; but this, unlike Sister Katrei, meets no approval from the marvelling Church.

Indeed, the Beghards and the Beguines, with their lax morals, their mendicant insolence, had become an insupportable burden. So, in despair, in 1328 the Church, as we have said, delivered fifty of them to the secular arm, and these were burned, as an example, in Cologne. The persecution was now steadfast and continuous; but still in secret places, and by strange underground channels, the panthiest idea spread on unseen—pantheism which now was no longer vague and veiled. "*We do not believe in God, and we do not love Him, and we do not adore Him, and we do not hope in Him, for this would be to avow that He is other than ourselves.*" Thus speak these heretics of the fourteenth century. So far have they pushed the phrase, God is all that exists.

From this time the cohesive force of Beguinism rapidly diminishes. In 1365 Pope Urban V. still speaks of the "children of Belial, Beghards and Beguines," but their name slips gradually out of the chronicles of edicts and of councils. Or it is applied to any new sect of heretics. In 1373 we hear of "the Beghards or Turlupins," and in the next century Beghard is frequently synonymous with

Lollard. The great heresy of the Free Spirit was divided into a hundred unimportant divisions. By the middle of the fifteenth century, The Beghards and Beguines were either orthodox communities of some tertiary order, or scattered hermits, living in woods and forests, and stealthily keeping red the few embers left of pantheistic heresy. It seemed as if the movement were really stamped out. But the phrase of Mechtild was not so easily confuted. No man can burn an idea.

We hear no more, it is true, of the Beguines or of the Weaving Brothers; but in the sixteenth century, when at Wittenberg and at Strasburg, at Basle and at Meaux, the great idea of the Reformation simultaneously awoke, in that period of spiritual ferment, the pantheism of the secular fraternities flamed out again, and more fiercely than before. The libertines, the anabaptists, and familists of the sixteenth century preserved in a coarser form the persecuted tradition of the Beghards and the Beguines.

The Convent of Helfta.

The great ideals of the world save themselves by strange disguises. Though the advance of progress threaten their existence, none the less they perpetuate themselves in unsuspected shelter. If to-day we see religion mask itself as devotion to humanity, it is but the reversal of the great masquerade of the Middle Ages, when whatever impulse of good-will to man was destined to survive assumed for safety's sake the garb of the Church. Benevolence, science, logic, philosophy, and all the arts put on the hood and cowl. And the time came when love also entered religion. Indeed, the convent was the one safe place of refuge in a struggling, dark, chaotic world—a world for which centuries of careful nurture had ill-fitted the sentiment of love. The Middle Ages had existed, one might say, for its development. During the century succeeding the invention of the Immaculate Conception (1134), the cultus of the Virgin became dominant in the Church, and, *pari passu*, the position of women grew nobler in the world—was, indeed, elevated and spiritualized to a dangerous artificial beauty. Then a thousand devices were discovered to hide from the yet imperfect man and woman the

brutality of the one and the meanness of the other. The Courts of Love, where no husband might be the lover of his wife, the gross and strained devotion of the minnesingers, the worship of Mary and the saints, were expedients unreal or ugly in themselves, but they imposed on mere brutish passion a beautiful sentiment of reverence and service. For they showed the woman beloved as a creature aloof and apart, separated from the disenchantment of possession by the distance of heaven or the barriers of earth.

Thus through the Middle Ages love grew and flourished; a plant delicate yet and scarcely acclimatised, but watered and tendered and sheltered. Without this care it could not grow, being still young and not well-rooted. Then in the thirteenth century a terrible convulsion disturbed the world, and the fate of all tender, exquisite things hung for a while in awful balance. For in that eventful century, which rounds the old world and begins the new, the long-gathering jealousy of pope and emperor burst into a fearful storm. The tempest of over twenty years which destroyed the empire of the house of Hohenstaufen left Rome, though victorious, none the less a prey to her own champion, Charles of Anjou. For three years he would not suffer the election of a pope, holding the keys of Peter in his unrelaxing clutches; and even when the papal see was nominally filled, the Angevine adventurer guided its counsels and prompted its decrees. One shipwreck engulfed both papacy and empire, nor could any foresee that from those wrecks far nobler vessels should be built. The hierarchic and feudal order of things had fallen, and

the spirit of law and federation was yet unknown. All over Europe spread darkness and confusion: Rome was paralysed, France crazed with superstition and communistic panic, Italy a mere disorganised prey for the next comer; and Germany, most piteous of all, with the convert's earnestness and the loyalty of a serf, not yet fit for the sudden withdrawal of the hierarchy and the feudalism to which she clung for support, Germany reeled heavily. It seemed that the end of the world was at hand; and truly, in this terrible interregnum, the whole fabric of the Middle Ages began to crack and gape in ominous ruin.

Now that the Courts of Love were wasted, his tournaments battle-fields, his minstrels shouting battle-cries, what had become of Love? Where should his ladies, sung so long and honoured, look for their knights? They are gone to fight for God and the king; they are gone far away, but no longer to the Holy Sepulchre; they are gone to ravage and ruin distant cities, or to lay low the power of Rome. Many never return; some after years—ten, fifteen, twenty years—come home again, tanned and grey—swearing troopers, whose talk is all of battle, whose camp jests and lewd stories fall like filth into the pure fountain of a woman's soul. What knight is this for a delicate lady to love! She must change the very nature of her love if this shall satisfy her heart. The frail ideal, nourished so long with care and patience, must die, so it seems. But, as in ancient legends, where the lustful lover pursues a pure nymph, gaining hold upon her, stretching out his hands for the prize, to find them empty, to find her out of

reach, safe in the inviolable greenness of the laurel, even so the tender spirit of love, with one violent effort, set itself beyond the lusts of the imbruted world, sheltered, transformed into the mystical love of God.

A natural impulse was given to religion by the divisions and disasters of society. We have shown by what channels the mystical spirit of Alexandria permeated the religion of the West. The knight from his captors or his captives, the scholar from his studies, the monk from his perusal of the most popular of saintly authors, might all become imbued with a like spirit. Throughout the West there spread, partially, indeed, and not to all alike, a scorn of science and understanding, and a sense of mystery, an aspiration to ecstasy, a desire to merge all personality in the infinite. Such influences did not create, they did but direct the movement. They were—as M. Vacherot has shown us—a source of inspiration, a reserve of tradition for a natural instinct which, even without them, must have satisfied itself. Owing partly to these semi-religious influences, partly to the external condition of affairs, the movement—which might have established another School of Alexandria, might have believed in astrology or the philosopher's stone, might have merely ended in jugglery and witchcraft—instead of this became a school for visionaries and ecstatics. How strong the movement was may be inferred by the length of its duration, and by our finding in its ranks not merely hysteric virgin saints, not merely the two priors of St. Victor, not merely the poetic Suso, the fervid Ruysbrock, the contem-

plative Tauler, but the wide intellect of Albertus Magnus, the strength of Eckhart, the practical wisdom of Gerson.

The doctrines of Neoplatonism, received through the medium of a saint, were translated into another sense by men of less intellect and stronger affections than the Alexandrines. Science is little to these later mystics, the inward spring of peace is much; they question with Bonaventura not doctrine but desire, not the human mind but heavenly grace. Not light they ask, but fire. By ecstasy they seek to unite themselves not only with the abstract wisdom, but with a supreme love. For ecstasy is to them the *ars amandi*, and to them the one thing needful not intelligence, but feeling. "Amor oculus est," says Richard of Saint Victor, "et amare videre est." To behold with this eye the things that are hidden from earthly vision; to die to the world, in order to live to Christ; to lose one's soul; to drown self, conscience, reason, virtue, feeling, in a flood of ecstasy, this had become the ambition of the nobler spirits of the world.

In this apotheosis of ecstasy, this contagion of love, the feminine element naturally predominated. The movement, which the gracious and pathetic figure of Elizabeth of Hungary announced, was to be, above all, a movement of women. Far beyond the glory of Eckhart and Gerson, above the eminence of thinker and teacher, shone, in this strange hierarchy of dreamers, the beatitude of the visionary and prophetess. Prophets of God some, others prophets of evil; so the Church decided. But it is hard to divide the spiritual abnegation of Bridget, of Catherine, of

the two German Elizabeths, of Mechtild of Magdeburg, Gertrude and Mechtild von Hackeborn, from the heresy which declared that to the soul lost in God the sins of the body are as naught. That heresy is but the others' holiness, pushed to its logical consequence.

The saints were chiefly women—women of vague, imperious, unsatisfied emotion, sick of a world given over to rapine, interdict, and slaughter, where no choice was left between disloyalty and damnation; women young and active, living for the most part the passive, temperate eventless life of the convent; women who imposed on themselves long fasts and vigils, whose tender flesh was bruised with the stone flags of the cell where they would lie of winter nights for penance, and torn with the lashings of the self-inflicted scourge. In this life no hope for them; in this world no love, no happiness, no possessions. As starving people dream of delicious feasts and banquets, they found in a vision the things withheld from them awake.

Amor rapit, unit, satisfacit: the practical Gerson lets fall the fiery phrase. Each of these virgin visionaries had said as much. Open the books of their exercises, their revelations; the dusty pages exhale a violence and tenderness of passion that the minnesingers never caught, the troubadors never felt, in their earthly singing. For these saintly visions are all of love—love which ravishes; nay, love which drowns, annihilates, swallows up. Love in a dream, and yet the one real thing in a cramped and narrow life; love which fills every interstice and cranny of a

void and aching heart; love unseen, untouched, unheard, for which the visionary waits hour by hour, in an anguish of tense devotion, waits till the muttered monotony of her prayers, the fixed, unvaried straining of her eyes, shall have lulled the body to a death-like trance, shall set free the soul to show her the mirage of her own unsatisfied desire.

I.

Throughout the thirteenth century Thuringia continued the centre and stronghold of German sanctity. The life of St. Elizabeth at the Wartburg had gone up from its midst like a purifying altar-flame to heaven. When she died in 1231, hundreds of men and women came in tears to honour the wasted body wrapped in its worn Franciscan cloak, lying dead in the poor little house at Marburg. From the memory of her life, from the pilgrimages to her tomb, a tradition and ideal of saintliness spread among the people. Fifteen years later, it was in Thuringia that the Pope found his champion. Even his oppression, and the defeat and death of that ill-starred defender of the faith did little to abate the popular ardour.

The convent of Rodardesdorf, near Eisleben, and the great princely convent of Quedlinburg, gave an especial religious distinction to Thuringia; but not until about the year 1234, when the rich and noble Freiherr von Hackeborn of Helfta placed at Rodardesdorf his little five-year-old daughter Gertrude, was the specially illustrious future of that house decided. Rodardesdorf was a convent of Cistercians, a thoughtful and peaceful place. The little Gertrude was

happy there. She was a serious and earnest child, "not content," says the chronicle, "with childish innocence, but, even when a babe, gifted with a constant gravity and prudence of demeanour." Indeed, that childish head was troubled with many things, for the little girl was passionately eager to learn all that came in her way: science, liberal arts, grammar, theology. So that she became no less honoured for her acquirements than beloved for her docility and modesty of bearing.

But the convent was to acquire another infant saint. The mother of Gertrude again visited the convent, and on one occasion brought with her her younger daughter, Mechtild, then seven years of age, and as many years younger than her sister. "They came for honest diversion," says the chronicle, probably to see little Gertrude, and certainly with no thought of leaving Mechtild behind. But the child was so delighted with the strange place, the large rooms, the little cells, the chapel with its altar lights, the children in the garden, the nuns who made much of her, that she declared she would willingly remain there for ever. Nor would she leave, though her mother bade her come. Then the sisters, delighted with so much holiness so young, instantly beseeched the mother to leave her little girl in their company for awhile, and to this she consented. Poor mother, did no pang go through her heart when the convent doors shut on both her children? It was for ever; no prayers, no commands could bring her back her wilful, loving, eager little Mechtild any more, for the *Vita* relates, "after this holy and blessed embrace her parents

could never withdraw her from that place for all the caresses and endearments that they knew how to make." With bruised ties and bleeding hearts the career of saintliness begins. "Only he," runs the Scripture that child would often hear, "that hateth father and mother can become my disciple."

Of the daily routine of life in the convent we may gain an idea from Abelard's directions to the nuns of the Paraclete, and, setting against the difference of date the difference of culture in the two countries, we may not unfairly suppose the Thuringian Cistercians of 1250 to have followed much the same rule of life as the Benedictines of Heloise adopted a century earlier.

According to the code of Abelard the convent was divided into six functions, all alike subject to the direction of the abbess. The sacristan was responsible for the convent treasury; she kept the keys, and had the care of the church plate and sacred vessels; and it was her duty to set the virgin sisters to prepare the wafers for the Host, which must not be made by widows. The chantress taught singing and reading, had care of the choir and of the library, to which she was expected to add by copying and illuminating manuscripts. The head of the infirmary had charge of the sick. Another sister was mistress of the wardrobe, and responsible not only for all the spinning, weaving, and sewing necessary for the convent, but also for the tanning and cobbling. The cellarer had in her charge the wines for the altar and the sick, the provisioning of the table, and the management of whatever the convent possessed in

orchards and garden-land, flocks and herds and hives, trout streams and mills. Lastly, the doorkeeper, who was especially chosen for courteous manners, judgment, and trustworthiness, was responsible for the keeping of the gate, the entertainment of guests, and the distribution of hospitality.

Life in the convent was not hard, but monotonous, eventless beyond description—a perpetual alternation of broken sleep, repeated tasks, and prayer. In the middle of the night the sisters rose for Matins, and the office over, trooped back through the darkness to the dormitory. There they slept till Lauds, which are sung at the break of day; in summer, when Lauds are early, the sisters slept again till Prime. At Prime they left the dormitory, having first washed their hands, and taking their books repaired to the cloister to read and sing until the office should begin. Service over, they all assembled in the chapter-house, where a lesson out of the Martyrology was read to them and expounded. On leaving the chapter each nun was sent to fulfil her allotted task—singing or sewing, nursing or baking—until the hour of Tierce, when mass was said. They then resumed their work till noon, the sixth hour, which was the convent dinner-time, except on fast-days, when it was postponed till Nones, or in Lent, when nothing was eaten till after Vespers at four. The convent fare was simple and spare. Save for the sick, no wine; stale bread of coarse flour; roots and greens, and at discretion of the abbess a portion of unflavoured meat on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. From the autumn equinox till Easter, on account of the short-

ness of the days, this one meal was considered sufficient for all save the infirm.

After dinner, in summer-time, the sisters slept till Nones; in the two hours between that office and Vespers they were set to finish their task, but at four the day's work was done. Between the spring and autumn equinoxes the sisters were permitted a light refreshment after Vespers. It was the only time when fruit might be eaten. This light supper over, Compline began. Then they all sought the dormitory again. On Saturday evenings they were a little later, as then the sisters were enjoined to purify themselves —that is to say, to wash their hands and feet, a function which the abbess or lay-sisters were specially directed to supervise. This done, they slept till the midnight matin-bell should clang them from their beds.

Out of such a life of dreary monotony, the same task day by day, or another exactly like it, the same prayer, the same lesson, always of saints and martyrs; out of this life of forced privation, this half-starved life of chants and broken dreams, who can wonder that (*Μορφὴ μία*) visions, mysteries, scandals, witchcraft continually arose. The two little children prospered in the convent which was at first merely a school for them, and an excellent school. Gertrude, the silent, studious, ambitious scholar, found there more books and better teachers than she could have had at home; and, so long as her soul was set on learning and studying, the homage paid her as a child set apart for God only served as a spur to her ambition. "She ever would increase her natural

beauty of soul by saintly customs, adding to it the splendour and the sweetness of all manner of flowered virtues, so that she should be more pleasing in the eyes of every one," says the chronicle in which after her death the nuns of Helfta embalmed her virtues. But while little Gertrude laboured so hard to make herself desirable, Mechtild, quite simply and without effort, won all hearts to herself. Although she was not so learned nor so grave as her sister, though once she had told a lie (the one lie of her life), boasting to her companions that she had seen a thief in the court, where thief was none; though, judging from a later vision, she had sometimes looked back from the plough and longed for her mother's love: ay, though no early holiness had, as with Gertrude, foretold the saint, and only after her entrance to the convent had manifested itself in her; despite all this, Mechtild was the loved one. While Gertrude in the library was toiling hard at grammar that her mind might be worthy of God and the love of her companions, Mechtild standing in the garden was surrounded with listeners, hanging on the words of her fanciful allegories as she expounded the message of God. While Gertrude was making extracts from the Fathers and compiling treasuries of Scripture to help the souls of the sisterhood, Mechtild, like a little mother, was going among the sick, speaking, ministering to each, giving help and comfort to all in affliction. As they grew older it was still the same—Gertrude putting her soul into her studies, Mechtild into her life; Gertrude absorbed and wise, with no one friend preferred to any other; Mechtild every

one's darling, beset with every one's confidences "to the impediment of the sweet quiet of her soul." Gertrude the humanist, Mechtild the human.

II.

So far all was right and fair. Each child naturally selected the education fitted to its wants, and became wise or loving as the need was. But when they came to full girlhood they did not quit this school whose teaching they had outgrown. These girls were, since their childhood, cloistered nuns dedicated to God. But only when their childhood was over could they appreciate the meaning of their vow. To Mechtild it did not greatly matter; her life in the world might have been fuller and richer, in the convent it was not wasted. She was so easily interested in others, so gifted to soothe the sick and suffering, so naturally humble and unselfish, that even the consciousness of sanctity could not injure her nature; in her visions, even, she rarely announces her own glory. It is Gertrude that she sees in the bosom of the Father, and she hears the Divine Voice proclaim, "Gertrude is far greater than this Mechtild." More often her visions are messages of consolation to those she has pitied and laboured for awake. She sees the dead baby of a certain sorrowing mother clad in scarlet and gold, and greatly glorified in heaven. She beholds God and the Virgin standing by the bed of one of the sisters who is sick unto death; or else her visions are tender and poetic fancies. She sees the Father giving all the saints to drink of the Fountain of Mercy. She sees

the Heart of God burning like a lamp; or, again, she beholds the sacred rose that blooms in the Heart of God; or, lastly, her visions supply the needs of her maimed and stinted life. Kneeling on the floor of her cell, this loving woman, with no natural ties, often sees God come to her as a little child of five years old, and, in a dream, God gives her His love, at last, to be her mother, "to care for her and lead her as a mother her child." Or she dreams, this woman with her love of colour and beauty, of beautiful women in splendid raiment. Mary comes to her in a gown the colour of air, sewn all over with tiny flowers of gold, and embroidered round the neck and sleeves with the holy monogram of Jesus. Or she comes in a pale green cloak, latticed over with gold, with the head of Christ in every lattice. St. Catherine of Alexandria appears in dull crimson, covered over with gold embroidery of little wheels, fastened at the breast with a clasp of two meeting hands of gold. Christ appears young and beautiful, in rose-coloured silk, stiff with gold and jewels, "yet not to be thrown away because so heavy, but rather ennobled," as the soul with the heavy gems of grief. Or she sees the least saint in Paradise, a youth of middle height, wonderfully lovely, most fair of face, his hair crisply curling, of a colour between green and white, clad all in green. Never, out of Meister Stefan's pictures, were there such deep colours, such quaintly-patterned gowns and mantles, such jewels and embroideries as figure in the visions of this poor little sallow saint, asleep herself in her darned serge and yellowed linen, and always clad, by her own choice, in the worst

clothes of the convent, torn and patched in all corners.

The real dangers of mysticism have little power over a soul so sweet and naïve as this. But it was otherwise with Gertrude. She was a woman of passionate intensity of imagination, of an ever-active and ambitious mind. During her childhood this had been wisely exercised in study. Had she gone then into the world life and learning would have employed it for her. Had she been a secular sister like Catherine of Siena, a wandering preacher and prophetess, like Mechtild of Magdeburg, or an avowedly learned and reforming abbess, like Heloise or Teresa, she would, perhaps, have been most useful and happiest of all. But, when she grew up, when she perceived the real aim of her cloistered life, her learning became odious to her. What had the vain lore of this world to do with the appointed spouse of Christ? "While this virgin was continuing the study of the humanities," relates the *Vita*, "she became aware that this study was a region too remote from the similitude of Christ, perceiving that too hungrily she had longed after human learning, for which reason she had not until that moment disposed her heart to receive Divine illumination. She knew then (and not without passionate sighs coming from the heart) that until this time she had been deprived both of the consolations and of the illuminations of Divine wisdom, since she had remained intent on human things."

A terrible conflict, a terrible temptation. With Gertrude's earnest nature there could be but one end.

She cut off from her the hungry and passionate love of human learning as she would have cut off a limb or plucked out an eye to enter, maimed but holy, into Paradise. With tears, and anguish, and bitter agony of prayer, she maimed her soul. But not always does the mutilated member heal. Woe to those whom nature punishes for their temerity with mortification, with numb and creeping death.

Now that Gertrude had, of her own will, shut off from herself all her former means of progress and employment, how should she spend her time? She was not, like Mechtild, by nature a sick-nurse and a confidant; she had not, like Mechtild, a beautiful voice which she could cultivate for the service of God; and to her dominant eager nature it was necessary to do something and to do it better than any one else. The one remnant of all her studies which she permitted herself was the translation of Latin prayers into German for the benefit of more ignorant sisters, and at this she would persevere the whole day long. But this oft-repeated, almost mechanical employment could not fill her mind, could open no vista to her ambition. There was, indeed, only one road that she could follow; all the circumstances of her life converged to the same vanishing point.

When she remembered, in the long vacant hours of sleeping or copying, the books she used to read, what thoughts would they naturally suggest to her? She had, we may be sure, read no books that would give her visions of the world outside—poems of Virgil the magician, or the minnesingers. To her the humanities were themselves books of theology; the writings

of the fathers of the Church, a tract of St. Bonaventura's it may be, or one of the sermons of Eckhart or of Albertus Magnus (then at the prime of their renown), certainly the works of Dionysius Areopagita. What would they have taught her, these books which she had given up to imitate the lowliness of Christ? They told her, one and all, how much more desirable was feeling than reason, ecstasy than care for others, faith than works; how far above all natural tenderness of human charity was the *virtus infusa*, the theological virtue, the love of God. Every hour of her life must have repeated the lesson. The eight offices of the day, the lesson from the *Martyrology*, which was all the food this hungry and active mind was given to fast upon; the daily task of copying prayers; the long, weary misery of being no one, in no true position. All these things must have spoken to this earnest, self-preoccupied Gertrude, who had toiled so long to make herself pleasing in the eyes of every one; and, now, knowing so well what was necessary, would she not strive in prayer for this last, dearest gift? Would she not set herself to learn this one thing needful? Most likely she had not long to pray, nor ever consciously began to learn, before the gift was granted, the science acquired, the strong mind weakened and perverted, the student an ecstatic.

III.

From that first moment of vision the fame of Gertrude grew so high and so rapidly, that when in 1251 the abbess of Rodardesdorf expired, this girl-ecstatic of nineteen was elected her successor. It is strange

that the duties of her new position, the great responsibilities of so famous a convent, did not draw her from her visions; but the influence of the time was strong, and the abbess of Rodardesdorf was beset by no imperious need for reform. There was no cleansing work of righteousness to be performed in that well-ordered house of high-born mystical ladies. All that Gertrude could do was, seven years after her nomination, when the springs of Rodardesdorf dried up, to remove the convent to her own castle of Helfta, an act which naturally increased her own position in the convent, and tripled her glory of abbess, benefactress, and ecstatic. Gertrude, however, was not the only saint in Helfta. Besides her sister, the sweet, fanciful Saint Mechtild, there was Gertrude the Nun,* sometimes confounded with the abbess, who in all probability wrote the concluding book of the *Vita*, certainly finished after St. Gertrude's death. The two daughters

* Herr Preger, notwithstanding the authority of other scholars, and the entire tradition of the Church, maintains the *Gertruden-buch* to be the work not of Gertrude von Hackeborn, but of a certain Gertrude the Nun, living at the same time in the same convent. He also, in an argument of great ingenuity, separates Mechtild the chantress from our Mechtild von Hackeborn, to whom, however he leaves the authorship of her works; but as in the Venetian edition of the *Vita* (1583 and 1605), I find the words, "Now Gertrude, with her sister Mechtild the chantress, managed all the affairs of the convent," with constant indications of the identity of Gertrude the abbess and Gertrude the saint; and as Lansperg, the earliest chronicler, expressly states them both to be the daughters of the Graf von Hackeborne, I have decided in this one matter not to accept the dictate of a scholar, to whom all students of the subject must remain indebted.

of the Count of Mansfeld were also professed in the convent, and were gifted disciples of its mystical doctrines. Sophia spent her life in enriching the already valuable library of Helfta, and Elizabeth painted, probably in the chapel.

In 1265 the convent, already the high school of ecstasy in the north of Germany, received a more famous woman than any of these. This was our Mechtild of Magdeburg, whose earnest faith and flashing, passionate eloquence, whose songs inspired with a wild, strange tenderness, whose life of hardship and adventure for the love of Christ, had rendered her one of the noblest and most endearing figures of her age. She chose Helfta to be the home of her declining years, and added another glory to the convent of St. Gertrude and St. Mechtild.

Such a house, it may be supposed, did not exhaust the spiritual energies of a nature so full of force and so ambitious as that of its young abbess. Her surroundings were but an added incentive to her aspiring soul. She worked hard, it is true, aided by her sister Mechtild. Every day she visited the infirmary and saw that the sick were well and cleanly treated. She ruled her nuns with thought and care; but when the hours of leisure came, the many daily periods set apart for prayer and meditation, then her old ecstasy overpowered her with a strength and vividness the more forcible for the obstacles it had to overcome. More passionate, more personal become her revelations as she lies abandoned to trance and vision in the arms of the spiritual Lover. So strong, so hot, so fierce, so tender are the words that fall from her lips, that

we cannot hear them now unmoved. Ah me! what vain and fruitless passion this dreaming love of the saint for a dream!

It was not until nine years after the bestowal of the "singular grace of divine familiarity," says the *Vita* that Gertrude wrote down the description of her visions. But the visions, themselves recorded in the five books of her revelations, seem to have begun almost immediately after her renunciation of human learning. "From that time she began to hold as vile all visible and external things, and verily not without a cause, for from that time the Lord opened to her the ways of Mount Zion, a place of joy and consolation. Leaving the study of grammar, in which she was greatly instructed, she turned to theology, that is to say, Holy Scripture and the lives of the saints, using them with infinite diligence."

And soon the saint herself began to speak from the mount, in her own language. None of the tender consolations and quaintly pictured fancies of Mechtild are here. The revelations of Gertrude manifest the ambition, the activity, the emotion of a crushed and passionate nature forced into an unnatural channel. Tragic and miserable spectacle: the strong passion, the earnest will so sorely wanted in the world outside, are spent vainly, vilely, in inducing terrible disease. The saint grows weaker as her visions increase in force; her mind, warped and broken, can bend but one way. And that way is towards inertia, madness, and annihilation. An old tale, oft-repeated, yet needed, perhaps, in these days of mesmerism and spiritual *séances*. An old tale, well-

known to the Yogis of India, to the monks and nuns of mediæval Europe, to all who have deliberately made themselves the victims of catalepsy and hysteria. For deliberately they did it. Many of the receipts have come down to us: the absolute cessation from practical affairs, the emptiness of mind and heart; the regulated diet, neither too little nor too much; the lack of sleep; the quiet, which no joy or woe of others may disturb, when, seated or kneeling in his cell, at an hour when digestion is well over, sighing lugubriously in deep, regular sighs, the eyes are fixed on one point too high or too low for perfect comfort, the arms are to beat the breast in monotonous routine, as Gerson and other mystical doctors prescribe, until a heavy trance involves the body, until the brain becomes deranged by this appalling and stultifying monotony, and creeping death or madness end the vision.

"It happened once," says the *Vita*, "that by reason of sickness, Gertrude was prevented from attending vespers; and, longing for these, and feeling sick at heart, she turned to the Lord, and said: 'O my Master, were it not more praiseworthy that I should now be singing in the choir with my other companions and hearing the prayers and the other regular exercises than to be lying in this weakness, in which I consume in negligence so many hours? To which He answered: 'Oh, dost thou believe the bridegroom holds his bride less dear, when he stayeth at home to taste the familiarity of his domestic pleasure, than when he glories to lead her forth, well adorned, before the gaze of the crowd?' from which speech she

understood that, in the divine service, the soul appears as a bride going forth; but, when heavily laden with bodily infirmities, then as a bride sleeping in the secret chamber; for the more that man is weak, shorn of all pleasures of the sense, destitute and impotent, the more is he made to delight the Lord."

Such a theory was naturally productive of fasts and vigils, nor, if the favour of her Lord depended on the sickness of her body, could it ever have been far from this poor ailing and anæmic girl. A revolting amount of suffering is naïvely and incidentally revealed in her works of spiritual grace. Scarce a chapter but opens, "Being again sorely weak from want of sustenance," "Lying again in bed helpless with sickness," "Being sorely oppressed with a burning of the liver," or with some similar avowal of the connection between her revelations and the weakness of her health. Often she piteously implores the Lord to restore her to her former soundness and well-being, but the answer is always the same. "Thy sickness is a dance and a festival for me," responds the Celestial Spouse; nor ever is there any hope given her of a cessation to her pain. In her wandering senses the poor tormented saint dimly guessed that her spiritual gifts were dependent on the utter prostration of her body and her mind.

The spectacle of her suffering convinced the whole convent of Gertrude's sanctity. They believed her in daily communication with their unseen Head. It was natural, therefore, that they should bring their sorrows to her and entreat her intercession, as men ask

a minister to counsel the king, or a steward to remedy the carelessness of the absent master, or a favoured mistress to beg that, for her love's sake, a piece of justice may be granted that otherwise were withheld. It was natural, also, that Gertrude should believe herself capable of guiding the will of God; natural that the strange vanity of the visionary and the hysteric should obscure the eyes of her mind, and lead her further on the road she had chosen. After visions, miracles.

IV.

Miracles exist in the mind of the witnesses. "Le miracle," said Lamennais, "existe quand on y croit." To the latter-day sceptic, the marvels which procured the canonization of Gertrude are such natural trifles that it is difficult to imagine they could ever have filled a whole countryside with rapture and thanksgiing. A sudden downfall of rain, the ceasing of a shower, the finding of a needle — such are her miracles. But hear with what pomp and circumstance the chronicler narrates them.

"One evening when the nuns had finished supper, they went into the court to finish a certain piece of work that they were set to do, and it happened that at this time the sun still shone, notwithstanding that in the sky there were several clouds which threatened rain; wherefore she, sighing, began heartily to converse with the Lord, I hearing all she said, as follows: 'O Lord God, Creator of everything, I do not wish that thou, as if compelled, should obey the will of me unworthy; none the less would it be very dear to

me, if pleasing to Thee, if Thy most liberal goodness shouldst prevail against Thine honest justice to retard a little, for my sake, this rain. None the less, Thy will be done.' She said these latter words resigning herself into the hands of God, not thinking of aught but the fulfilment of His good pleasure; a marvellous thing it must certainly be accounted, that scarcely had she finished speaking when lightning, thunder, and great drops of rain burst forth with great fury; for which cause, moved with pity for the other sisters, she remained altogether filled with fear, and again she said to the Lord, 'Let Thy goodness, O most clement God, last at least so long as while we finish our appointed task.' At these words the most clement God, to show how in everything He was pleased to grant her prayer, held up the rain until the nuns had finished the task they were at work upon; which done, they returned to the convent, and scarcely had they reached the gate when there began a tempest of rain and thunder and lightning, so that some of the sisters who had lingered behind could not enter the door before they were soaked to the skin."

V.

Gertrude was the saint of the convent, and yet her ambition cannot have been wholly realized. She, who ever since her childhood had laboured hard to acquire "all manner of flowered virtues in order to please the eyes of every one," she, the favoured of God, was nevertheless in the convent less beloved

than simple Mechtild. The fact is revealed unconsciously in every page of her life, in all the numerous revelations when God declares that notwithstanding the convent's suffrage, Gertrude is greater than Mechtild. And greater she was—more passionate, strong, and earnest, suffering anguish and burning with great desires that her sweet and happy sister could not conceive. Love was necessary to her, love and approbation. They were the very food of her soul. Reading side by side her revelations and her life, one easily comprehends how in proportion as she failed to gain the love and tenderness of her companions, her visions become erotic and passionate. To give such a nature respect, esteem, awe, as a reward for its sacrifice, is in bitterest truth to give a stone to the child crying for bread. Gertrude being hungry dreamed of a feast; phantasmal banquets which nourish not, but madden.

As time went on, Gertrude transferred all her earnestness, all her powers of feeling, from the outer world to this dream-born inner life. Censorious, abstracted, caring little for physical suffering, she was tender and anxious to the last degree in all matters that concerned the soul. And this without any interest in the personality of the creature she longed to save. She had, says her biographer, not one friend so dear that to save her she would by so much as one word commit an offence against perfect justice, and would declare that rather would she consent to the injury of her own mother than harbour an evil thought against an enemy. Her conversation was in heaven, and the things of the world were as

dust to her. Nay, as poison. She was as careful as Pascal* by no word of hers ever to draw to herself the heart of any person; it was not for her who was beloved of God to unite herself in earthly friendship, and as one would fly a person stricken with a pestilent disease, she fled from any one who sought her affection. Never now could she endure to hear a word of earthly love; rather would she remain deprived of the services and the goodwill of all the world than ever consent that, by reason of human favour the heart of any should be joined to hers.

So says the chronicle. Yet with all this bitter indifference, this love turned sour in her heart, she kept a great tenderness for erring or tormented souls, praying and watching for them, warning and consoling; and though the sinner proved obdurate, not yet would she relax her care; nay, when the sisters besought her not to afflict herself for the sins of the ungoldly, she would answer that she would rather suffer death than console herself for the misery of those who would only understand their own perdition when at last they should stand in face of the eternal expiation. So great was her compassion, that did she only hear of any one sick in spirit, be he never so far away, she could not rest without endeavouring to console his sorrow. And as men laid low with fever exist from day to day in the hope of recovery, watch-

* "La vraie et unique vertue et donc de se haïr. Il est injuste qu'on s'attache à moi, quoiqu'on le fasse avec plaisir et volontairement. Je tromperais ceux à qui j'en ferais nâitre le désir; car je ne suis la fin de personne et n'ai pas de quoi les satisfaire:" Pascal told his married sister she ought not to caress her own children or suffer them to caress her.

ing themselves to see if they are not a little better, so she longed and watched from hour to hour that the Lord might console the mourner and ease him in his affliction.

Strange and pathetic this zeal for the indefinable and impersonal soul, concerning itself nowise with character or feeling, with mind or physical well-being. Strange and awful this transmuted love, this transformed humanity and kindness, which deal with unrealities while all around a world sickens and dies. Yet not so strange if we remember that to exchange the reality for the shadow, the thought for the dream, and truth for a phantasm, is the principle of mysticism.

VI.

Meanwhile Mechtild, a mystic by doctrine and circumstance, but not by temperament, concerned herself, even in the convent, chiefly with the affairs of reality. She was, as we have seen, every one's friend, nurse, and confidant, and but slenderly concerned with saintly glories for herself. She never wrought any miracles, nor did God ever tell her that she was His most favoured among women. It was Gertrude's glory that she declared. The saintly acts that are recorded of her have a pathetic human grotesqueness never to be found in Gertrude's doings or sayings. For instance, out of a great pity for the sins of the mummers and dancers at carnival, she filled her bed full of potsherds and broken glass, and rolled in them till she was a mass of cuts and sores, begging God to accept her suffering as a set-off to the merry-making

of the world outside. This is not the true mystical temper, which ignores all but the union of the soul with God. Mechtild sought no advancement for her own soul, she sought to palliate the offences of the guilty and to save them from punishment rather than bring them to repentance; moreover she felt herself responsible for their errors. The true ecstatic, lost in God, abjures human responsibility. Nevertheless, even in the convent, Mechtild, with her merry patience in suffering, her care for the sick body no less than the sick soul, her humility and lovingness, was naturally dearer than her austere, abstracted sister-saint. And, none the less, the sisterhood was aware that Gertrude not Mechtild was their real title to honour.

As the mystical life spread like a contagion through the convent, many of the younger sisters, underfed, deprived of air and exercise, had not strength to support the abnormal existence of the visionary. Sickness was frequent in this convent of ecstatics, and whether at Rodardesdorf or at Helfta its mortality was excessive. The nuns died young of undefined diseases. We are always meeting allusions to their short, dream-visited lives, to their early and inexplicable dying. They perish of anæmia, before the acknowledgedly consumptive sisters; and the nuns can find no reason for their death unless it be that God was anxious to remove so much sweetness to flourish perpetually in His presence. The diseases of the convent are such physical ills as are induced by mental strain and by bodily inanition—consumption, hysteric convulsions, or paralysis, disturbances of the liver. Such as cannot die—such as, like Gertrude

herself, have too strong a fibre to perish in girlhood —linger, tormented by sickness, prematurely old and useless. All they have to console them is the phrase, vouchsafed by her heavenly bridegroom to Gertrude in vision, "Lo! ye that fain would hasten into my presence, ye are as a spouse that bare and unadorned would venture into the nuptial chamber; know, that after this death which ye so much desire, no further grace can accrue to the soul, nor can it suffer any more for God's sake."

Mechtild of Magdeburg, Dante's Matilda, was the first of the greater saints to succumb. A long life of hardship, of energetic striving with a guilty world, years of Beguine Prophecy, much labour of writing and preaching, and the pain of bodily weariness, had worn her out. At the age of sixty-seven the strongest and sweetest of all the German women-mystics departed from a world which she had not shrunk to face, which even from her cloister she had striven to ennoble. The strong, reforming spirit was stilled at last. The one woman in the convent of Helfta who knew the world as it is, its sins and aspirations, its generosities and crimes, was dead. A window was shut in that house, a window showing the world beyond the chapel walls, and letting in upon the heavy smell of flickering candles and swinging censers the free breath of the wind. Henceforth there was no reminder of the larger world, the purer air outside: Mechtild of Magdeburg was dead.

VII.

No such release was appointed for Gertrude; the easy death of the body was not for her, though for death she prayed by day and by night, finding that her prayers for health and strength were never granted. Nailed to her mattress by exceeding weakness, she watched the younger nuns die, one by one, "admitted to the celestial marriage-chambers," while she, faint, palsied, useless, lingered on. "O, my God," she cries, "could I not serve Thee better with my old strength than thus?" And ever the soul-heard answer comes, that the more humbled the body, the poorer the proud intellect of man, so much the dearer to God is his spiritual essence. Thus dragged on year after year, and the great abbess filled her five books of revelations and her eight books of spiritual exercises. Her life was spent and she was old. The later hagiographers relate of Saint Gertrude that she died of a languor of Divine love. Modern science would call by another name this long palsy of the body through the prostration of the mind. But no diagnosis, saintly or scientific, can add to the sense of misery and waste with which we recall that strong life so early broken, those twenty-five years of strained nerves and aching limbs, that six-months-long daily death of hysterical paralysis.

"This elect of God," relates the *Vita*, "full of the Holy Spirit and worthy to be embraced by the arms of Divine charity, Gertrude, most benign abbess, all-praiseworthy, having laboured for forty years and as

many days in the honour and praise of God, ruling her abbey wisely and with much prudence, sweetly, and with much discretion, being by reason of all these virtues flowery as a fresh rose in this world, and marvellously gracious and worthy to be loved, not by God only, but by mankind as well, at last, after forty years and forty days, fell into a grievous sickness, which is known as minor palsy, a form of apoplexy."

The narrators of the life, who knew Gertrude and had often seen her, say no word, it will be perceived, of the celestial love-sickness which a more sentimental taste gave out afterwards to be the cause of her death. And, indeed, such a superstition could not rise, even round so great a saint, while the physical details of her last weakness remained fresh in the minds of the nuns of Helfta. They mourned her truly, and believed that never a holier saint had been translated to those pleasant fields of heavenly green for which she had so often longed. But, with an admirable *naïveté*, even while they believed that God had drawn her miraculously from her sick bed into His arms, they knew that she had died of palsy. To them there was nothing incongruous in the two ideas; they had no thought of concealing—they would rather display—the degradations and infirmities of the mere human body which had so long enchained the heavenly soul. At first her senses remained to her, only she could not move her limbs, could not stir the wasted hands that once had been so swift to sew, to write, to put in order whatever was out of place. She could lie still and dream, the poor, dying mystic.

For she had given to her now, as a gift that should not be taken away, that perfect quiescence and immobility of body which she had practised so often, so patiently, by day and night, in times gone past. And soon she was to be granted that other wing of ecstasy, complete abstraction of the mind from all human thoughts and affairs. So heavy became the burden of her infirmity that she could no longer order the affairs of the household, no longer care for others. At last she could not speak, she could not pray, she could not think. She was perfected in the mystical way; annihilated, stultified, palsied, she had attained the summit of her desire. Never moving, never changing, dead-alive, she lay there month by month, a helpless burden upon the community. Worshipped as one indeed highly favoured of the Lord by those whose feet were all set on the same sterile and deadly road, she could give utterance to no other words but these, "My soul!" And this phrase she repeated over and over again, finding it marvellously ample and sufficient to express all the movements of the spirit. O pitiless ideal, O cruel and revolting doctrine, is it to this you would reduce the living, thinking, active human mind? Is the end of such continued sacrifice, such years of hourly, daily labour nothing but this—a palsied useless body, a dumb, numb soul, with no thought and no desire beyond itself? At length the hour of dissolution was at hand, the night in which no man shall work; and in waiting for this the days of life had gone by fruitless and wasted; in hoping for this the sun had risen and set in vain, the

seasons had changed unnoticed; in preparation for this soul and heart and mind and physical powers had deliberately hamstrung their noblest faculties; and now the long-awaited night was at hand, the night in which all mistakes are forgotten, all cares and anguish set at rest.

The last time that Gertrude spoke these two all-sufficing words, "My soul!" was one evening when Compline was at an end. Then began her passage to the other life. At this time, fables the author of the end of the *Vita*, in quaint allegorical eulogy, not only the chamber of the dying abbess, but the whole of the monastery, was crowded and thronged to excess, since among the praying and weeping sisterhood knelt all the virgin company of heaven.

"At length the happy hour was come when the Celestial and Imperial Spouse should receive His beloved in His house of love, finally, after so much longing, set free of the prison of the world." The nuns knelt round praying and weeping; the watching sisters saw angels kneeling too. And we, do we not see the ghosts of stillborn pity, and joy, and love, and help, standing white-eyed and shadowy there? Yet wherefore should all or any weep? The end is at hand; the labour is over and gone, and soon she will rest so well that, even if she could, she would not quit her quiet bed. Well may she sleep, poor, troubled soul, mistaken and most noble in its errors; well may she sleep who, being dead, yet speaks with a clearer and surer voice than she spoke with on earth, telling of patience and sacrifice borne willingly for love's sake, of faithful endurance through pain

and toil, teaching an example and a warning in one word. And in the middle of their praying none heard at what moment the sleeping spirit went. The abbess was dead; but the convent went on as though she had been still alive. Another abbess took her place; another nun saw visions and worked miracles in her stead, a lesser saint but of the same quality. Even after Mechtild's death some years after, the old life went on—the old routine of sleep and prayer, or of forced wakeful nights and baneful ecstasy; and the old life of insufficient food and insufficient thought begot the old aberrations and diseases. The fever had not yet run its course.

We standing here, safe, as we imagine, from the deadly epidemic, curiously studying these eight hundred closely printed pages as records of morbid hysteria, may feel our hearts melt with a melancholy regret for the shipwreck of so many noble lives. For the worst of this malady was that it attacked the loftiest spirits, as phylloxera the oldest and most fruitful vines. We may pity and praise them in a breath; we may give a kindly wonder to their belated love and say that, but for them, the sentiments that fills our hearts to-day would have been less patient, less tender, less exalted. And this is well, that we should honour the best in them. But let us take care that we ourselves are free and whole; let us not deem ourselves too safe, but place a quarantine on our own souls lest the sweet and fatal poison of mysticism penetrate thither unawares.

The Attraction of the Abyss.

I.

As an island is surrounded by water, as night surrounds the stars, and air the globe, so beyond the region of the known there stretches an illimitable space of darkness and of silence. All minds know that it is there; to many of us it is a background of repose to the busy scene of life; to some the hidden tract has its chart of faith or dogma. But there are others to whom that vast and dark Unknown is more present than the small and shining certainty of the Universe. They are sucked into the eddy of its vastness and its darkness. These natures turn from the substance to dream of the shadow, they leave the narrow fields of science and go out boldly over those unsounded waters beyond. Souls such as these are never quite at home in life: the dark, the undreamed of, the infinite has enchanted them. They are drawn by the attraction of the Abyss.

Mysticism allures different men by different methods. It draws by various lines the passionate heart, the broken and humbled will, the heated fancy, the indignant spirit wroth at the hardness and evil

of the world. It draws no less the reasoning and metaphysical mind, repelled by dogma and yet desirous of the Deity. For Mysticism is not only an affair of dreams, of miracles, and visions, it is not only a satisfaction to disordered imaginations, to diseased and stunted passions; it includes a system of philosophy so logical that who accepts the first easy thesis arrives without negation or amazement at the last. The Mystics have, in fact, made a science of the soul, an elaborate system of abstractions, quite logical in itself, although in contradiction to the truths of physical nature. No one, indeed, is readier to admit this contradiction than the Mystic himself, for the soul, he says, is exactly the contrary of the body. It is therefore natural that as bodily life rises in the scale from simple to complex, so the soul's existence should be purest when least differentiate. For the soul and the body meet on one level for a moment, but they come from different positions. The human body is the highest evolution of the animate world; the human soul, the Mystics assure us, is the lowest and last descent of Infinite Being. In fact, the soul of man is to Divinity in the same relation as the zoophyte is to us. Only, unfortunately for the simile, in this strange supernatural cosmos the zoophyte is higher than the man. Let us rather say that man, having progressed from the zoophyte to humanity in body, must now in soul ascend from the man to the zoophyte. For the soul, we must remember, is divinest when most simple. It is the last descent of God, and God (the Mystics say) is absolute unity and simplicity. "God," says Meister Eckhart, "is

the simplest essence of existence; and who, thinking of God, sees any distinction from utter simplicity, be sure he seeth not God."

II.

"But how" (we can imagine one of Eckhart's audience exclaiming), "how can the absolutely simple be the manifold? God, you say, is the Simple and the One; and yet you say that every soul descends from God. If God is absolutely simple and single, He cannot divide Himself into many souls." Eckhart here, we may be sure, would smile and praise the discretion of his assailant; for this objection brings us to the central theory of Speculative Mysticism, the dearest dogma of Plotinus, of Dionysius, of Scotus Erigena, as of Master Eckhart.

Spirit is everywhere one. Spirit is in the Godhead and indivisible. The Godhead exists, our Mystics tell us, above and beyond all Divine theophanies; the Godhead exists as a vast and unfathomable ocean, rolling its seas of emptiness and silence from pole to pole. But everywhere the ocean is bordered by the land; and its waters, in the circle of their tides, wash over a hundred shores, and fill a thousand bays and creeks and little rocky pools. Even as the deep sea sends its shallower waters over the sands, and then withdraws them into its eternal and unfathomable fulness, so the waters of God flow into every soul. And when the sea withdraws its tide, it withdraws not merely the contents of this pool and yonder creek, but the sea itself, eternally undivided,

though for the space of a tide it filled the limits and the hollows of the shore.

But not all the strand, is washed by the sea; above a certain line the sands grow their rank, stiff grass, and grey-green thistles; the sands are almost land. And not the whole of the soul is visited by the Divine simplicity; only the water-line, the arid depth of the soul, is swept over and filled by the infinite being of God. "There is something in the soul," taught Meister Eckhart, "uncreated and uncreatable; there is something in the soul which is beyond the soul, Divine, simple, an utter nothingness; there is a place in the soul where God inhabits, and this base of the soul is one with the base of God. And to reach this obscure retreat of the Eternal and Divine, where the unconscious Godhead dwells—this is the supreme and final goal of all created things."

III.

And how shall the Mystic reach this obscure and inner depth, this silence where the soul is one with God? By sinking into himself. For the Mystic there exists no exterior world. Since God is within us, what value is there in the world without? "Omnes creaturæ sunt purum nihil," formulates Master Eckhart. For the Mystic the body is only a prison, a distortion, a hindrance; its senses, its experience cannot teach him. "Being freed from the folly of the body," said Plato, "we shall of ourselves know the whole real essence." "Matter," says Plotinus, "is the principle of individuation, and who would

seek the one must quit the things of matter." Without the body, then, we were no longer personal, no longer separate; we were all One and all God. It is the body which determines our character; there is no personality in the soul. We must conceive it as pure water poured into a coloured vase, which becomes red, or blue, or green, according to the colour of the vase. The colour is not a principle of the water, and does not affect the water. So the soul poured into the body appears to take a note and colour of its own, but, poured out again, is seen to be unaltered. The first aim of the true Mystic is to purify his spirit from this extraneous and earthly tint; to make the vase, if he can, as colourless, as simple and uniform as that infinite Being, of which, in Erigena's phrase, the Soul is the last descent.

Since the soul is God the world is nothing. No more than the eye can taste or the ear handle, can the created comprehend the Divine. "If we are to know anything purely," we read again in Plato, "we must be separate from the body." And Plotinus adds that he who enters in quest of the One must ascend to the First Principle of his own nature. The First Principle of Plotinus is the same as Meister Eckhart's Foundation of the Soul. It is the One. Intellect may be a means to reach it, but it is certainly not an end. The Mystic philosopher thinks himself into an ecstasy; and the ecstasy, not the thought, is his goal.

Our Mystic has therefore abandoned the world, and abandoned his own experience in the endeavour to attain to God. He must be quite still, passive, dumb;

the mystic should be as a new-born child who has not yet smiled in his mother's face. He must not even *will* to be made one with God. "He must have no seeking for himself more than has a corpse," writes Eckhart. "Let him be as one dead," counsels Suso. "He must not be satisfied with any deed or virtue," adds the Flemish Ruysbroch, "but only in the Abyss." And Tauler rises to a passionate eloquence: "Sink thou into thy Depth and thy Nothingness, and let the tower and all its bells fall down upon thee; yea, let all the devils in Hell storm out upon thee; let Heaven and Earth with all their creatures assail thee, yet shall they all but marvellously serve thee. . . . Sink thou only into thy Nothingness, and the better part is thine."

IV.

Death in life is the aim of the Mystic, and his consolation is the thought of his annihilation. There is not any rest for him, and no solace save in that which Suso calls "the desolate wilderness and deep chasm of unsearchable Deity." To us of a later age to whom the greatest and most alluring promise of religion is the hope of Personal Immortality, it is hard to realize a fact which must strike every student; namely, that throughout the Middle Ages the most passionate motive of a hundred passionate sects, the dearest thesis of the deepest thinkers in the Church, was this intense desire of personal annihilation. As a fact, this frenzy after Nothingness cost the Church more heresies than any corruption in herself. The very doctors of the

Church were tainted with it. The lowest of the people—poor, starved, and hunted fanatics—formed themselves into bands and brotherhoods to preach this comforting gospel of extinction. The books of Dionysius the Areopagite carried the Alexandrian theories of the One into every monastery in Europe. The Almaricians, the Vaudois, the followers of Ortlieb, the Beguines, the brothers and sisters of the Free Spirit, and many other sects of poor and wandering people, spread their fantastic corruptions of the same, throughout the working classes. From the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, the desire of many a mystical saint was identical with the despair of atheists to-day. It was the extinction of the personal soul. The whirligig of time brings strange revenges.

Mysticism throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries occupied, in the thinking and religious world, a position almost identical with that of Spiritualism in our day. Like its modern offshoot, mediæval Mysticism could be superimposed on any cult or habit; like Spiritualism, it lent itself equally to a grossly sensual, or an abstract and idealist interpretation. And Mysticism, therefore, appealed to an immense audience; to the ignorant and pretentious, dissatisfied with the Church's authority, merely because it was authority; to the pure reformers, anxious to preserve religion and quit the formal and corrupted shows of it; to tender, pious, and dreaming souls, with no great hold upon the world of fact; to the abstract reasoner, eager to preserve his faith while letting untenable dogma slip away. The

authorized religion occupied a singular position towards these Mystics, who formed, as it were, a Church within the Church. Afraid to quite disown them or, indeed, to openly disapprove, lest she might thereby weaken her own hold, yet conscious all the while that these theories of her children were scarcely less subversive of her own supremacy than those of any heretic or atheist, the Church burnt one Mystic and canonized another, with an impartiality born of vacillation. The influence of the Mystics was indeed immense, and too serious to be lightly regarded. They promised to destroy the prison, the canker, the disease of *Self*—to let the freed soul loose from the body, to vanish for ever in the Divine darkness of the unimaginable Abyss; they made the comfort of many a dreaming soul, tortured by the ineradicable memory of human sin. They offered to the tired thinker, the starved and weary labourer, the broken nun, the harassed townspeople, an attraction which the Church herself dared not openly afford; and many who had wandered away from the hard-and-fast, strict-and-narrow fold of Rome, found a refuge in Mysticism, who might else have thrown aside all claim to faith. Even as to-day, many are Spiritualists who otherwise would certainly be Agnostics. For Spiritualism insists on none of the bonds or dogmas of religion, and offers a palpable proof to its believers of that which religion only promises; that is to say, the Immortality of the Soul, that golden mirage-fountain of our thirsty modern world. This was precisely the position of mediæval Mysticism, only, as we know, it was Rest, not Life, that she offered;

extinction, and not continuance; not Paradise, but the Abyss.

V.

That a great many people everywhere at one time ardently desire one thing is certainly no proof that their desire shall be satisfied; but it shows a real want in the heart of man—a want which may be stopped by altered conditions, if not by the actual things desired. As many people longed for extinction in the harassed Middle Ages as pine for immortality to-day. I do not mean to say they formulated this desire, for most of them were fervent Christians. But life was bitter then, and they hoped to extinguish their weary and craving souls in the unconscious Godhead. When life is bitter now, we say "Eternal Justice owes us a happier experience to discharge our sufferings here." But in both attitudes the same one fact remains, that so long as life is bitter, men will crave and will complain. No modern preacher has spoken more fervently of the joys of immortality than these mediæval Mystics spoke of the Abyss. Each to each has been the final and immeasurable recompense for all the wrongs that ever there were in the world. By many ardent Churchmen, and many saints, and many thinkers in the Middle Ages, God was chiefly worshipped as the Abyss. He was the Supreme Annihilation. The soul must plunge, says Eckhart, into pure Nothingness. The soul must sink, says Tauler, in the Divine Darkness, into the secret place of the Divine Abyss. "There is no safety," says Guil-

lame Briçonnet, "save in the Abyss" ("l'abysme qui abysme en désabysmant"). Adventitious reward, says Suso, may come in the consciousness of having conquered evil and done good; but true reward, essential reward, is only in the wild waste and deep abyss of inscrutable Deity, in the union of the soul with sheer impersonal Godhead. This Godhead, says Eckhart, is a simple stillness without quality or distinction. God is neither this nor that. Who can distinguish and say, "This is good, sees not God; for all that is in the Godhead is absolutely one, and formless, and void, and interminable, and passive." And the names under which God is chiefly worshipped show this strange impersonal attitude. The Divine Dark, the Obscure Night, the Desert, the Abyss, the Unimaged Nakedness, the Infinite Essence, the Hidden Darkness, the One, the Supreme Nothing: these are the names of this remote, abstract Jehovah of the mediæval Mystics.

VI.

To lose themselves in this unconscious beautitude was the religious ideal of a thousand souls. To lose themselves, to drown, extinguish, break through and beyond the hateful imprisoning Ego—this was the motive of their mood. But what, we may ask, remains of a man after he has lost himself so utterly? How can he distinguish the bliss of which he dreams? How can he even know he is resting? We are suspicious that these Mystics did not quite realize their own desires, that they meant some residue of them-

selves to remain and enjoy the sensation of their own Nirvana. And so we ask of them what they mean by the Abyss. "Thereof," says Eckhart, "we cannot speak. It is the simplest essence of existence, it is unknown, and must ever be unknown. It is the simple darkness of the silent waste. It is the utmost term."

But yet we are unsatisfied and persist in questioning. How can the spirit of man, deprived of virtue, cognition, will, personality and life, remain immortal? Still more, how can he enjoy such immortality? The dim feeling of such eternal rest we all can understand, who have gone suddenly from a lighted room into the vast night, and have felt our souls suddenly invaded and possessed by a sense of mystery and silence. We have felt this; but in his final beatitude the Mystic must not feel: "He must be as one dead." We also can understand the dizzy rapture of unwinding abstraction from abstraction, till we weave a net that seems to hold the heaven and all its stars. But the Mystic may not think. "He must see neither distinction nor difference." And the passionate upward spring of the soul towards a God, unseen, unknown, in which it still believes; thus might we pray. But the Mystic does not pray. "So long as a man desires to do the will of God, so long he is not truly fit; he who may seek the Godhead, he neither wills, nor knows, nor cares."

What then, we ask again, what is the satisfaction that draws your souls so firmly towards the Abyss? Will no one answer? And Tauler, the great Mystical Dominican, replies, "There remains to a man, the

fathomless annihilation of himself; and an absolute ignoring of his personal self—of all aims, of all will, heart, purpose, use, or way."

VII.

It is not, then, a personal delight that awaits the Mystic in the abyss; it is the sense of absorption in his Deity. It is hard to define the character of this Godhead for which the man so gladly lays down his soul and his life. Since it is identical with the foundation of the soul (and this, Eckhart assures us, is not only Divine and simple, but an Utter Nothingness), it is difficult to lay hold of the idea of its divinity—or indeed of its difference from created matter which is also *purum Nihil*, and it is easy to see how, by this path of negation, Mysticism always diverges into Pantheism. . . The essence of the Mystical Divinity appears to be its very incomprehensibility; and it would be rash and vain indeed to form an idea thereof. But we may at least attempt to understand what that divinity appeared to its worshippers.

"The One," begins Plotinus, "is neither substance, nor quality, nor reason, nor soul, neither moving, nor at rest, not in place and not in time; neither is it of any sort or kind." Thus we learn what things were not intrinsic to the Deity; we learn that we must conceive a bodiless, unqualified, impersonal, interminable Void; an eternal, undifferentiate essence of existence; an infinite Being not to be approached by reason or by soul. Eckhart goes a step further, and affirms not only what the Godhead is not, but even

what it is. "There is a Godhead," he says, "above God. The Godhead neither moves nor works. . . It is a simple Stillness, an eternal Silence."

If this were all we might comprehend the longing for quiet, the passionate desire for rest which made the wearied and the trouble-harried of all times deify silence and repose. Mysticism has ever flourished best in starved or stormy ages. It is the shrinking of the soul from a perplexed and hideous outer life; it is in some the desire for love and peace, in some the desire for rest, in some for immortality elsewhere. But in logical and speculative minds it is more than this; the God of the Speculative Mystics is not merely Sleep, not merely Dreams, not merely Stillness. They carry their reasoning fearlessly to its natural conclusion, and this is worthy of all praise in them; but that they should worship that conclusion is surely strange—for "God is non-being," writes Scotus Erigena; and, Eckhart adds that when the soul penetrates the pure uncreate essence of the Godhead, then Nothingness is at last in the presence of Nothingness.

VIII.

God, then, is Nothing; Erigena has given us the phrase, for *Nihilum*, he says, is the infinite essence of God. The soul is Nothing; "a fathomless annihilation of self," in Tauler's words, "an utter nothingness," in Eckhart's sentence. And, lastly, the world is nothing, *purum Nihil*, and as unreal as the rest. Already, in the close of the twelfth century, David of Dinant had declared that Everything is at the same

time Spirit, Matter, and God. The later Mystics added a new line to his Thesis: All is One and All is Nothing.

Such is the result of this strange Idealism, which sacrifices from first to last the idea of personality to the conception of God. These are the dogma of this singular phase of thought and feeling; a phase which unites all that is cold and formal in philosophy with all that is unreasoning, perfervid, and hysterical in a Religious Revival. The doctors and preachers of Speculative Mysticism, have trances no less real than those of Saint Francis; but what they contemplate with rapture is not the idea of Infinite Love. It is Infinite Nothing which fills them with ecstasy. And these Mystical thinkers are as precise and as liable to become the mere pedants of a system, as any follower of Kant or Comte. And yet, though they seek to use only their reason, they despise reason. These philosophers look upon reason as the humble handmaiden of ecstasy. And that divine ecstasy is excited by the thought of a Nihilum.

This indeed appears almost an absurd position; and yet the position of the Mystics was honourable and intelligent. They attempted to answer questions which even to-day the theologians elude (see Newman, "Grammar of Assent," p. 210). "Whence comes Evil?" Evil, they reply, is not created by God, but, so to speak, the blanks and spaces not filled up by His creation. Evil and pain have no Real Existence; they are but a deficiency of vitality; they are negative and temporary qualities unrecognized by an unconscious God innocent of inflicting them. "Why are we created responsible beings without our own

consent?" Our bodies are not created by God and we are not responsible to Him for their errors. They are the expressions of our Eternal souls—their own expressions at their own desire as a *modus vivendi* in the world. "How can God need our action if He is omnipotent? If omnipotent, how tolerant of Evil? If permitting suffering, sin, and Hell, how then All-loving? If All-loving, how Just?" These questions are all answered by the mystical conception of God as a Divine Passivity, an unconscious Fund of Existence. All that is impossible and absurd in the theories of the Mystics is caused by adapting them to religious ideas. They had to explain the immortality of the soul, . . . and they spoke of eternal absorption into an Infinite Nothing. They had to explain a good and omnipotent God creating an evil and impotent humanity. They made the one nothing and the other nothing.

The Schism.

In the year 1377 the Pope was at Avignon. Seventy years ago a Pope had come there, as the guest of the Count of Provence, in order to arrange with the King of France the iniquitous extermination of the Templars. He had come to Avignon in the hour of Papal triumph; for in the tragic ruin of the Hohenstaufens, the prestige of the empire was destroyed at last. But in reality this fatal victory had left the Pope no longer the arbiter between France and Germany, but the dependent of the sole surviving Power. The attraction of successful France drew the Pope from Rome to Avignon.

At Rome the Pope had left his Vatican, his authority, his tradition. At Avignon, a chance guest, hastily lodged in the Dominican monastery, he was little better than the Political Agent of Philippe-le-Bel. Yet he showed no hurry to return. Clement was a Frenchman of the South, a Gascon, at home in Provence but cruelly expatriated among the dissensions, the enthusiasms, the treacheries of foreign Italy. Year after year found him still at Avignon, and there he died in the year 1315. His successor, John XXI. or XXII., was another Gascon; and Benedict XII.

(1334–1342) and Clement VI. (1342–1352) were Frenchmen also. They built a mighty palace at Avignon, immense, with huge square towers, and walls — four metres thick — scarce broken by the rare small pointed windows rearing their colossal strength high into the air. The great golden-brown palace was less of a palace than a prison, less of a cloister than a castle. It was, in fact, a baron's fortress of the feudal age; for the Pope had almost forgotten that he was Pope of Rome; he was the Count of Venaissin and Avignon.

He was rich; he was a great lord; he lived luxuriously within those frowning gates. His rooms were full of money-brokers, weighing and counting out their heaps of gold; and there arose no Christ to drive them from the Temple. France, England, Germany, Italy, groaned in vain beneath the exactions of the unscrupulous financial ability that furnished the Court of Avignon with its soft living, its delicate manners, its attention to the Arts. In the beautiful house upon whose walls Simone Memmi had painted a host of his sweet and melancholy angels, men forgot the trumpet clang of the name of Hildebrand; and when the officers of Clement VI. dared to remonstrate with him upon the Oriental magnificence of his palace, deprecating an expenditure beyond that of any of his predecessors—"None of my predecessors knew how to be a Pope," replied the Count of Venaissin. The Papal ideal had changed.

Yet it would be wrong to regard the Popes at Avignon as Oriental satraps dreaming away, among enchanted reveries, a life of luxury. They were above

all things French and very French; active, keen, humane, with a genius for prosperity, a natural quickness for organization. They had a practical piety, of which they made a good income, not without an honest expenditure of pains. Their missions were established in Egypt, India, China, Nubia, Abyssinia, Barbary, and Morocco. Yet, though so eager to convert the heathen, they kept no rancour in their hearts against the unconverted. Cruel they were sometimes, for their age was cruel, but often they were amazingly humane. John XXII. launched Bull after Bull in defence of the unhappy Jews, massacred by Christian greed, and the perverted pity of Christian superstition. "As Jews they are Jews, as men they are men," said the Pope. "Abhor their doctrines, respect their lives and their wealth." And Clement VI., when France and Germany tortured and expelled the abominated nation, threw open wide the gates of Avignon, and at the knees of the Vicar of Christ, he made a momentary sanctuary for the Wandering Jew.

Clement was followed by Innocent VI., another Frenchman, equally content with Avignon. When he died it was nearly sixty years since any Pope had trodden the holy stones of Rome. But his successor, Urban V., for all his Gallic blood, revolted against the position of St. Peter as chaplain to the King of France. He saw that the Church lands in Italy were slipping continually from the Pope's control, while Papal vicars established themselves as hereditary masters of their fiefs, and city after city declared itself with impunity no longer the vassal of St. Peter, but a free Republic.

In Germany the doctrines of Marsiglio and Occam had enduringly ruined the prestige of the Pope. For they declared the Bishop of Rome a simple bishop, subject to the law, subject to the Council, subject to deposition at the hands of the faithful; his thunders were pronounced illegitimate and harmless since no priest, but only a Council General, could excommunicate or even interdict a nation or a king. In Germany the Reformation had begun, as it was to continue, upon the lines of theory and dogma; in England it was already a political revolt, a declaration of national independence. In 1365 England refused to pay the tribute of 1,000 marks which John had promised to the Pope as to his lawful suzerain. England at that moment was triumphant. Ten years ago the battle of Poictiers had secured her hold on France. The French king had died a captive in the Savoy in London, and Europe was not yet aware that the new king of France was Charles the Wise.

At that moment, indeed, France, in reality so near the top of the wheel of fortune,appeared at her lowest. Nations and men forget how quick that wheel revolves; and the Pope, beholding France his sole protector against the world, and France the prey of England, felt himself no longer safe at Avignon. In 1361 a company of freebooters had defeated the Papal troops at the very gates of the Papal city; the Pope had bought them off with a ransom, and had redoubled the fortifications. But he had realized his insecurity. It was evident that the real interests of the Church demanded the return of the Pope to Rome.

Urban made a courageous, a heroic effort. He dragged his reluctant Court of luxurious French Cardinals across the seas to Rome. But in that black and savage haunt of robbers, the Pope remembered Avignon too well. He came home at Christmas time in 1379; but it was only to die in the beautiful familiar palace; and, out of France, the faithful called his death the judgment of the Lord upon him who looks back from the plough.

A brighter epoch opened for his successor, Gregory XI. The genius of King Charles and his brothers, the Dukes of Anjou and Burgundy, had restored the fortunes of France; and Anjou, at any rate, was aware of the advantage which the House of France might reap from the partnership of a Pope at Avignon. For the Pope, of course, was a Frenchman and willing to assist in the triumph of his country, a triumph he could best assist by remaining at Avignon to further and inspire the policy of his king. Every tie, indeed, united to detain Gregory in Provence. He was no ascetic, indifferent to glory or to comfort; but an affectionate, natural man, loving his ease, loving his family, loving the land where he was born. At Avignon he dwelt among his friends, his kinsmen, his father the Comte de Beaufort, his mother, his four sisters. The stories of his Cardinals could only add to his own horror of that distant Italy whose language he could not speak. He was ill, and he dreaded the miasma of Rome; he needed the comforts of that Court whose luxurious memory should long survive in France. "You should have come to Europe a few years ago, before the

Schism," writes the anonymous author of Maître Jehan de Meun—

> "N'a pas longtemps mourût Gregoire
> Je te dis que toute la gloire
> Du plus hault seigneur terrien
> Vers son estat n'estoit plus rien.
> Là ne falloit ne pompe ne mise
> Que herault sceult à devise,
> Richesse du tout surmontant
> Tout prince que lors fut vivant." *

Yet it was Gregory the Eleventh who was to restore the Papacy to Rome.

It was no longer so easy to return as it had been in the days of Urban. That Pope had not removed to Rome until the energy of Gil Albornoz had reduced the princes of Italy into submission. But now Albornoz was dead, and Italy was more than ever tumultuous and discordant, for the French Governors whom Urban had left behind him had filled the Papal states with horror of the French Pope. Petrarch also was dead, whose pen no less than the sword of Albornoz had been a potent instrument for the return of Urban. The times were changed, and Italy, who had mourned so long the Papal tiara fallen from her forehead, was no longer willing to receive it. After seventy years of exile the Papacy had become a foreign power, and by many of the Italian princes the restoration of Gregory seemed little less than a French invasion. Of all the Papal states only Orvieto, Ancona,

* Paris: Bib. Nat. Francais, 811; No. 7203; "L'Apparicion de Jehan de Meun."

Cesano, and Jesi remained true to him. Florence, of old so faithful to the Church, was now united against her with the Ghibelline Viscontis of Milan; and the Arch-Guelf clasped with a mailed hand her new crimson banner written in golden letters with the one word *Libertas*.

The Italians seemed as capable of shaking off the Pope as they had been capable of shaking off the Emperor. Only a few voices still lamented the exile of St. Peter. Gregory knew very well that the return to Rome meant strife and bitterness, and that he must re-enter his dominions bringing in his hand not peace, but a sword. This prospect inspired him with disgust and fatigue; while every principle of habit, affection, patriotism, loyalty, and selfish interest conspired to keep him in Avignon. All this in one scale; but there lay in the other the conscience of the Pope and the voice that inspired that conscience. It was the voice of a young Italian nun. Europe, distracted with wars, perplexed, unguided, heard at last one voice that proclaimed the will of God, and acknowledged her conscience in St. Catherine of Siena.

The letters of St. Catherine came frequently to Avignon, and with them came other letters from the French Governors telling of the increasing difficulty of keeping together the little that was left of the patrimony of St. Peter. Gregory became visibly disturbed. His conscience urged him to return to Rome. In July the Duke of Anjou * came to Avignon to dissuade the Pope from an enterprise so disastrous, as he believed, to the future of France. Of all the

* July 17, 1376.

royal princes Anjou was the one specially concerned with Italian policy. He was a man handsome, impressive, with a breadth of view and a force of ambition that made him many followers. This son of St. Louis could not fail to influence the Pope. He made it harder to go from Avignon; but the persuading voice of Catherine would not be stilled. The Pope was ill and afraid, a timid man; his sisters and his parents clung to him, entreating him to stay; his Cardinals opposed him; his king commanded: yet on the 13th of September he quitted Avignon. Evil omens added to the discouragement of his spirit; his horse stumbled under him at starting, and fearful tempests delayed him on the sea. But on January 17, 1377, the Pope re-entered Rome.

The seventy years which had made the beauty of Avignon had ruined Rome. No longer the pilgrims brought her the custom of foreign countries; the Court of the Vatican no longer gave an impetus to trade; the prestige of the Pope had ceased to make of Rome the centre of Europe; and the deserted city had realized her intrinsic poverty. Thirty years ago Rienzi had proclaimed her a cave of robbers rather than the abode of decent men. The churches were in ruins,* many of them wholly roofless; and in St. Peter's and the Lateran the flocks nibbled the grass of the pavement up to the steps of the altar. Row after row of ruined dwelling-places gave way to wild fields and heaths—scars of desolation upon the depopulated enclosure of Aurelian. If mediæval Rome lay in ruins, the Rome of antiquity was yet more

* Pastor, "Geschichte der Päpste," i. 63, after Gregorovius.

ruthlessly destroyed, and the temples and theatres of the pagans were used as a quarry or a limekiln by their savage and impoverished successors. For with prosperity, peace and order had deserted Rome. The fierce clans of Colonna and Orsini terrorized the starved and fever-stricken populace; and there was no law beyond their tyranny. Murder was frequent, vendetta an honoured custom, and the Eternal City the shambles of unpunished bloodshedding.

In such a place decency, quiet, or even safety were naturally strangers. The Cardinals, unwilling martyrs, mourned day and night for Avignon. The Pope himself became disenchanted, ungentle, and embittered. But he was resolved not to quit this odious Italy until the patrimony of St. Peter was regained. Albornoz was dead, it is true; but in the Cardinal of the Twelve Apostles the Pope found a spirit no less militant, resolute and cruel to lead his armies against the revolted cities and to re-establish in Italy the vanished prestige of Rome.

Robert of Geneva, Cardinal of the Twelve Apostles, was, like the Pope himself, a Frenchman of good family and aristocratic prejudice. His father was the Count of Geneva, his mother Mahault of Auvergne and Boulogne. In his eyes the revolt of subjects was a crime beyond excuse; and when, as in the present case, there was added to the denial of the divine right of sovereigns a heretic apostasy from the dominion of the Church, his indignation dried the founts of pity in his heart. The history of his whole life proves the Cardinal to be not naturally cruel, nor even vindictive; but his campaign in Italy was terrible.

With the Frenchman's distrust of the Italians, Robert refused to engage Italian condottieri; he knew that these companies, changing masters continually, were gentle to the enemy of the moment, the brother-in-arms of yesterday and to-morrow. The Cardinal, fiercely in earnest, engaged the Breton Jehan de Malestroit who had cried, "Where the sun can enter, I can enter!" and the Englishman, Sir John Hawkwood, with his White Company the most terrible of the day. Supported by these pitiless auxiliaries, Robert of Geneva quenched in blood the fierce resistance of Florence, Bologna, Cesena, Faenza, and other rebellious cities. Massacre after massacre, sack and pillage innumerable marked his progress; but the voice of the Churchman was never heard to cry for mercy. He had no admiration for the obstinate courage of the besieged; they were rebels, and beyond pity. "I will wash my hands in their blood!" he cried at Bologna and at Cesena there were 5,000 slain. These things made the name of the young Cardinal an abomination in Italy. But they secured in one campaign the submission of the Italians.

The laurels of Robert of Geneva still were green when, on March 27, 1378, Gregory the Eleventh died at Anagni. The Pope had been on the point of returning to Avignon; and the necessity of their prolonged residence in savage Rome, and the fact that the Conclave must be held there, fell with the weight of misfortune upon the impatient Cardinals.

It was the first Conclave that had been held in Rome for fifty-seven years, and the Roman populace clamoured in the streets for a Roman Pope. But

among the sixteen Cardinals of the Conclave, eleven were French. They might easily have carried the necessary majority of two-thirds had they been of one mind among themselves; but the hatred of North and South did not merely divide the French from the Italians; it divided the Frenchmen among themselves. Gregory and Clement had both been Limousins, and the majority of the French Cardinals decided to continue this tradition. The remnant, however—the Gallicans, as they called themselves—preferred even an Italian to a Limousin; and their spokesman, Robert of Geneva, made overtures to the Trans-Alpines. The result was the election of a man of no party, a man who was not even a Cardinal. Bartolommeo Prignano, Archbishop of Bari, was an Italian; but he was something more than an Italian; he was a Neapolitan, a subject of Queen Giovanna, and therefore presumably in favour of the French. He had lived at Avignon, and was familiar with French customs and French policy. It was hoped that he might prove a bond of union. Scarcely was his election accomplished, in haste, amid the noises of the shouting mob outside, when the impatient Romans burst into the Conclave, clamouring for a Roman Pope. The Cardinals dared not confess their choice of a Neapolitan, and in their terror they lied, imposing on the people the Cardinal of St. Peter's, a Roman born. This fraud, together with the constraint put on the Conclave by the violence of the mob, were a few months later alleged against the validity of the election of Prignano.

But at first no conscience was troubled by this

irregularity. For six months the Archbishop of Bari wore an undisputed tiara, and Urban VI. succeeded quietly to Gregory. Urban was zealous for reform, passionately determined against simony, pure in his life, energetic, resolute; but virtue has seldom been manifest in so unlovable an Avatar. The man was a Neapolitan peasant: short, squat, coarse, and savage. He flung rude words and violent speeches like mud in the faces of his elegant French Cardinals. "Fool!" "Blockhead!" "Simoniacal Pharisee!"—such were the hard nails with which he studded the ever unpalatable word Reform; and one day, had not Robert of Geneva caught the holy father by the sleeve, he would have struck a Cardinal in the assembled Consistory.

Robert of Geneva was thirty-six years old; he was tall, commanding, with a handsome face and fine manners. His aristocratic urbanity veiled a nature that did not scorn to do and dare. There could be no greater contrast to the Pope than he, and he became the idol of the Cardinals, although, in fact, he, the Arch-Gallican, was the distant cause of the election of Urban. His reputation for ferocity in battle added a prestige to his pleasant courtliness: it was he who should have been the Pope! He would not have kept the College, throughout the sweltering summer, in Rome where the detested Urban declared that he would live and die. Something must be done, and at once, for Urban threatened to create a majority of Italian Cardinals. One by one the Cardinals left Rome for their health. Their resort was first Anagni, thence they went to Fondi. It was

an open secret in Rome wherefore they found the air so good there. Urban got wind of their conferences, and on the 18th of September he created twenty-eight Italian cardinals. Two days later there was a great ceremony in the church at Fondi. The French Cardinals announced to the world that at last a legitimate Pope had been elected in succession to Gregory. He was, of course, a Frenchman; he was Robert of Geneva; he was Clement VII., the first Antipope of the great Schism.

The Church was terribly divided by this news—Clement, elected by all the French, was not repudiated by the Italian Cardinals, who, playing the waiting game of their nation, remained neutral. Yet the contest was a contest not of persons, but of nationalities. "The significance of Urban's election lay in the fact that it restored the Papacy to Rome, and freed it from the influence of France." * Catharine of Siena clearly perceived this significance, and wrote of Clement, who was to undo her sacred mission, as "a devil in the shape of man." In the North of Italy the campaign of Clement in the previous year persuaded the decimated cities of the truth of this opinion; but the South was not firm for Urban, and Naples openly declared herself the champion of his rival. The confusion was not only in Italy. The Church everywhere was shaken to its foundations. In many bishoprics there were two bishops; † there was a terrible doubt

* Creighton, "History of the Papacy," vol. i. p. 64.

† Especially in Germany—Mayence, Breslau, Constance, Metz, Loire, Breslau, Lübeck, &c. See Pastor., *op. cit.*, book ii. p. 108, *et seq.*

in the minds of the Faithful, for of the two Popes, one must be Antichrist, his followers heretics, and consigned to eternal damnation. It is not too much to say that the authority of the Church never recovered from this long and terrible questioning. The minds of the pious turned from the Church to God; Mysticism and heresy consoled the uncertain; and false prophets were common in the land.

Confusion in the Church was echoed by confusion in the State. England, because of the war with France, was passionate for Urban. The Empire also was for Urban; and Brittany, and all whose hand was against the French. "France desires not merely the Papacy, but the universal monarchy of the globe," wrote Urban to the Emperor.* But among the smaller states France had still her supporters; Scotland, Savoy, Naples, Leon, and Castile followed in her wake, and declared for Clement. There was great joy in France. Louis of Anjou, perhaps the first of European princes to send in his adhesion to the Antipope, was consoled for the departure of Gregory; and when the news was brought to the king, he exclaimed, "I am Pope at last!" But the joy was the joy of princes, not the joy of the people. The nation mourned the confusion that had fallen on the Church, and the University of Paris wrapped itself in a melancholy neutrality.

* Sept. 6, 1382. *Vide* Pastor., p. 108.

Valentine Visconti.

I.

Valentine Visconti, greater than Helen as the cause of battles, was born in the Abbey of Pavia, in the year 1366. Her grandfather, Galeazzo Visconti, had left Milan rather suddenly, being ill with gout and "temendo la severità" of one so skilled in the use of succession-powders as Bernabò his brother, co-tyrant with him of Lombardy. He had designed a safe and splendid castle for himself in Pavia. While it was still unfinished Valentine was born in the hospitable old Certosa there.*

Galeazzo Visconti had taken with him from Milan his wife, Blanche of Savoy, his little daughter Iolanthe, and his married son Giangaleazzo, with his wife Isabelle. These last were the parents of Valentine. When she was born her mother was sixteen and her father fifteen years of age.† At her nativity there

* At the same time there dwelt in Milan another little Valentine Visconti, daughter of Bernabò, in after years the widowed Queen of Cyprus, and herself an interesting and pathetic figure.

† Corio on different pages puts the date of the birth of Giangaleazzo as 1352 and 1343. The first date, 1352, agrees with the account of Galeotto del Caretto and the Deed of Majority in Corio.

were, we are told, incredible rejoicings; for the pride of Galeazzo Visconti was gratified by the birth of a grandchild who was no less the grand-daughter of a King of France.

The mother of Valentine was that little French princess who, six years ago, had been sold into Lombardy to help to raise the golden millions of her father's ransom. John the Good had received for his daughter the sum of five hundred thousand golden florins, a sort of inverse marriage portion, the price of a royal alliance. But Galeazzo had not paid for barren honour only: Isabelle had brought her husband the county and the title of Vertus in Champagne. Though the little girl had gone weeping into Italy, her tears were soon dried. She had left a devastated and ruined country; she came into a land of sumptuous tyranny, of riches and magnificence. Life was easy at Milan and at Pavia, where Galeazzo was busied with his new university, where Giangaleazzo—a timid, intellectual, orderly creature—spent day after day in his study full of enormous parchment ledgers, directing the staff of secretaries who copied into them his accounts, his memoranda, and duplicates of his correspondence. Priests and friars from the old Certosa, professors of law and learning from the new college, poets also—the English poet, Master Geoffrey Chaucer, and the prince of poets himself, Messer Francesco Petrarca,—learned men like Philippe de Mézières, visitors from so far away as England, France, or Cyprus—these were the guests of the palace. Gradually the stately home echoed with children's voices. Valentine was born in 1366. One

brother grew strong and playful at her side; another died in babyhood. When the third was born, in 1373, Isabelle died, and a few months afterwards her baby followed her.

The immense castle of Pavia was very quiet now. Iolanthe, the girl-widow of the Duke of Clarence, had married, in 1372, the Marquis of Monferrat. There were only the old Visconti and his wife, and the studious young Count of Vertus and his two little children. It was quieter still when, in 1378, Galeazzo Visconti died. He had been a terrible old man: cruel, unscrupulous, scholarly. It was he who obtained from the Emperor, Charles IV., in 1361, the privilege to found the University of Pavia, and he who protected it by an edict threatening with heavy punishments the Milanese who dared to study in another school. And he it was, also, who threw alive into a fiery furnace two priests who came to him on an unwelcome message; and he who, with his brother Bernabò, had poisoned a third brother, co-heir and co-tyrant with them in Lombardy. They had divided his share, Galeazzo taking Piacenza, Pavia, the west to Novara, and as far as Como in the north; while Bernabò possessed the rich province of the east. Both ruled alike in Milan. Both should have been equally powerful. But Galeazzo had left all his share to the sole Count of Vertus, and he, too, had only one son to follow him, whereas the signory of Bernabò was strengthened and divided by eleven turbulent and violent young sons.

Valentine's father remembered the fate of his uncle. He kept very quiet, surrounded himself with

priests and guards, ate of no dish before a score of stewards tasted of it, and dissimulated his ambition. This he did so well that the timid Count of Vertus became a by-word and a laughing-stock in the house of Bernabò. Although the young man had taken care to obtain from the Emperor investitures which conferred upon him *absolute* authority; * although by his judicious protection of the people he made himself the desired deliverer of the unhappy Milanese, still Bernabò and his children could not take their kinsman seriously. And the better to lull their suspicions, in 1380 the young Count of Vertus came a-courting to the noisy Castello di Porta Giovio, where Bernabò kept house with such of his nine-and-twenty children as still remained in Milan. It was a great riotous house full of voices, full of splendid young men in armour (Palamedes, Lancilotto, Sagramoro), full of beautiful women and fair young girls with lovely names (Achiletta, Verde, Damigella), and not less radiant for their easy familiarity with evil. One of these dangerous maidens, Caterina, the Count of Vertus took to be his second wife. In the next year, in 1381, on the 4th of October, his boy, Astorre, died.

Valentine was now his only heir, for during the first eight years of their marriage Caterina Visconti had no children. Valentine was fifteen years old, of

* Tu, spectabilisque Azo, natus tuus . . . auctoritate, bayliâ, nec non Regiæ Potestatis plenitudine, tam ordinariâ quam absolutâ, &c., Feb., 1380. Luenig. De Ducatu Mediolanense, in the "Codex Italiæ Diplomaticus," No. xxvii. See also Investiture of Asti, 1383, to Giangaleazzo (vos et heredes vestri) in the Archives Nationales, K. 53, dossier 22.

an age to be dowered and married. Her father, however, kept her at home with him, teaching her many things—too much, some people said, for they thought her as wise as Medea. She could invent posies; she could read not only Italian books, but Latin, French, and German. Into whatever court she might hereafter marry, she would be not only the daughter of the Duke of Milan, but his diplomatic agent. I do not know if she could speak English, but in those years of warfare the English were often at Milan, and Valentine when a little girl had seen (a brilliant, sudden vision) her English uncle of Clarence, who had died so strangely at Alba, and was buried at Pavia. She was a scholarly maiden, possessing of her own no less than eleven books; more than her grandfather, King John, had ever owned in his royal library at Paris. And she could write as well as read—a clear, excellent hand, of which the signature still exists in the Paris archives. Froissart in later days remarked on the frequent letters that she wrote to her father: "Madame Valentine wrote him all she knew."

I do not know if Valentine was beautiful. A line in "Le Pastouralet" speaks of her as

"Maret, qui le miex dansoit,"

and mentions the courtesy of "la touse mignotte"—the dainty dame. This conveys an impression of nothing more positive than elegance and grace. We can fill up the frame with a couple of portraits which still exists in the Bibliothèque Nationale: small

grisaille illuminations adorning a manuscript poem * in defence of Valentine. There is nothing very distinctive in either portrait—no accent of striking personality or resemblance. They represent the same young and slender woman, rather tall, with a long neck and slim arms, and a bust both full and delicate. The head is small, the hair parted from ear to ear across the middle of the head, the back locks being tied in a Greek knot, the front ones divided again in the middle and looped in pendant braids above the ear. Under this severe coiffure we discern a serious gentle placid face—long narrow eyes, a high forehead, a full mouth with pretty pursed lips ; a face too closely following the mediæval ideal for it to impress us very strongly as a likeness. Valentine is clothed in a low-cut, tight gown girdled round the hips, with long, tight sleeves descending to the knuckles of the slim and delicate hands—over this she wears a very ample trained surtout, also low in the neck, falling in rich folds to her feet and buttoned down the front to the hips, where it is sewn together, but split up at the arms in immense wide sleeve-holes, a yard long, revealing the under dress. If the young duchess was not precisely beautiful, yet certainly she was beautifully attired. The catalogue of her gala-dresses is a thing to wonder on : scarlet, and silver, and cloth of gold, and rich embroidery ; cloths of peacock-green and mulberry colour ; tissues of netted pearls. And she had as many pearls, diamonds, sapphires, and balass-rubies as any princess in a

* "L'Apparicion de Maistre Jehan de Meun," Fr. ii., 7203. MSS. Bib. Nat.

fairy-story. She wore them sewn all over her caps, round her girdles, encircling her young throat, and showered broadcast across the brocades and embroidery of her gowns. With all this, at sixteen, and with the subtle sweetness of the natural Lombard grace, it is not necessary to be beautiful.

II.

In 1382 certain guests came to Milan, who marvelled at the magnificence of these Viscontis, who talked much with Valentine's father, and who spread abroad the tale of his daughter's wisdom and her splendour. They must also have impressed on the mind of this young girl the strength, the beauty, and the wealth of France. And they must no less have spurred the silent and vigilant ambition of her father; for in the late May of 1382, along the roads of Lombardy, four thousand men rode together to be the guests of Milan. They were all mounted on beautiful chargers caparisoned in silk and precious metals; they were all clad in suits of burnished armour; light aigrettes floated from their helmets. "They seemed the army of Xerxes," wrote the Monk of St. Denis; "their beasts of burden went slowly under loads of gold and treasure. Those that beheld them, astrologers and prophets, read in the future the records of their fabulous glory." In truth, they were a host of heroes. Knights like the Count of Savoy and the Count of Polenza went in the ranks. At their head rode a tall, square-shouldered man, with fair locks beginning to grizzle, and a handsome countenance.

He was magnificent in his cloak of woven gold and lilies. This was Louis of Anjou, King of Sicily, setting out for Naples to conquer his new kingdom.

A kingdom in Italy! It was the dearest vision of the age. The kingdom of Adria, a dream never realized; the kingdom of Naples, a phantom eluding for two hundred years the eager grasp of France. In the subtle mind of Giangaleazzo Visconti, a third, a vaster kingdom, was already taking shape—a kingdom dead and buried for near five hundred years—the kingdom of Italy!

But to gain Italy it was necessary to be secure in Milan. While his guests rode on triumphantly to famine and disaster, the Count of Vertus elaborated his plan. When the King of Sicily, wrapped in a remnant of homespun daubed with painted yellow lilies, lay dead in his unconquered kingdom, defeated in his grave at Bari, Giangaleazzo Visconti ruled supreme in Lombardy.

He had plotted so well that one sole death secured this change. On the 6th of May, 1385, Giangaleazzo, apparently *en route* for the shrine of our Lady of Varese, passed by the gates of Milan. His uncle and his cousins went out to meet him, smiling at the immense guard which ever attended the timid Hermit of Pavia. But now Giangaleazzo dropped the mask. In an hour Milan was his, his cousins his prisoners, and his uncle, with his *dilettissima amante,* fast in the Castle of Trezzo. Giangaleazzo, no less skilled in poisons than his father, had him poisoned there, and buried him in Milan in a sepulchre of splendid marble. But he showed no

wanton cruelty. His cousins escaped, destitute indeed, but unharmed. No unnecessary pain attended the murder of the tyrant Bernabò, decently executed by a well-cooked dish of vegetables. Ambition, not revenge, nor the blood-mania of his race, was the master passion of the new Lord of Lombardy. If any questioned his proceedings, he could produce the investiture of Wenzel, granting him absolute authority and final judgment. The children of Bernabò were stupefied and did not rebel; most of the sons went to fight in the ranks of Sir John Hawkwood; and the people of Milan hailed the Count of Vertus as a deliverer. He taxed them heavily, indeed, but without disorder; and his police were so excellent that he used to smile and say, "I am the only robber in my provinces." Giangaleazzo was now master of a great domain, immensely rich, three-and-thirty. He meant to go far. In 1386 he sent to Pope Urban, demanding the title of *King of Italy*.

Urban refused, and in future the Ghibelline Count of Vertus addressed his requests to the Emperor, or else to the Anti-Pope at Avignon, who asked nothing better than to make himself a party in Italy. But first of all, Giangaleazzo began to conquer his kingdom. Verona, Padua, Pisa, Siena, Perugia, Assisi, Bologna, Spoleto, fell like ninepins before his gathering force. Florence began to tremble. Foreign countries began to talk of this new conqueror, of his force, his wealth, his one young daughter. Clement the Pope of Avignon, among others, perceived that with Anjou in the south and Visconti in the north, a great Gallic party might be formed in Italy.

Clement was at once the creature and the patron of the kings of France. In the winter of 1386–87, while the Milanese messenger still were in the saddle arranging a marriage between Valentine and the Emperor's brother, suddenly the Governor of Vertus arrived at Pavia. He brought a message from the King of France, the young Charles VI. The King demanded the hand of Valentine for his only brother, Louis.

This was an important step. The two first children of the King of France had died as soon as they were born, and Louis was still the heir to the Crown. Valentine, six years after her father's second marriage, was still his only child. It was current in France that the Count of Vertus turned to his daughter and said, "When I see you again, fair daughter, I trust you will be Queen of France."

III.

This proposal, which came as a surprise to Europe and almost as an outrage to the Emperor, was no surprise to the Lord of Milan. Months before Giangaleazzo had laid his plans. There exists at Paris in the Archives Nationales (K. 554, No.7) the summary of a Project of Marriage between Louis and Valentine, dated the 26th of August, 1386.

It is interesting to note that in this early draft there is no thought of any possible French claim to Milan. Valentine is dowered with Asti and its revenue —for which her husband was never to be constrained to pay homage; she was also to bring her husband

450,000 golden florins, and to come to him "bien joyellée et aornée de joyaulx." And, only after the death of her father, she was to succeed to the county of Vertus in Champagne.

This was a great deal, but this was not enough. There was in France a strong party so hostile to the Lord of Milan, that riches, and mere riches, were not enough to overpower their opposition. Visconti desired above all things a Royal alliance. He saw that the Guelf—the national party—in Italy was strong and was unrepresented. He would be Head of the Guelfs, until he secured something better, and his best title to that Headship was a French alliance. Moreover, self-preservation, no less than ambition, rendered the marriage desirable. Isabel of Bavaria, granddaughter of the murdered Bernabò Visconti, was Queen of France. How could Giangaleazzo suffer that his exiled cousins should possess so tremendous an advantage over him? He may have felt himself insecure in his usurped sovereignty, so long as France was united by blood and interest only to the Disinherited. If Valentine married Louis, Milan was safe from France. So at Christmas, 1386, Giangaleazzo offered the husband of Valentine the county of Vertus, in his lifetime as well as after his death, and included in the marriage contract the astounding clause of the succession of Valentine to Milan.

Even without this, Valentine was a very wealthy heiress; she brought back to France her mother's dowry, the county of Vertus in Champagne. In addition to this she took into the kingdom 450,000

golden florins, a freight of golden ornaments and jewels, furniture to the amount of 70,000 florins, gold and silver plate, and the county of Asti in Lombardy, with a yearly income of nearly 30,000 golden florins.*

The county of Asti comprised a whole province of towns, villages, and castles. Thirty signories were in its fief; forty-eight villas paid homage to the Count of Asti; Brie and Cherasco, two large towns in Piedmont, belonged directly to him. In the politics of those times few things are more striking than the singular lightmindedness with which a king of France bestows upon a Lombard adventurer a county in the very heart and centre of his own kingdom; or the confidence with which an Italian conqueror hands the key of his position to a wealthy neighbour. The situation of the French at Asti turned out to have the very gravest political consequences. It assured them Savona, Genoa, Pisa for a moment, and a century of wars about the Milanese. For this secure footing in Lombardy gave a point of reality to their vision of an Italian kingdom, and made the subtraction of Italy from the Empire appear not only desirable but possible. On the other hand, it familiarized Italy with the French. Henceforth the Italian princes, in any dispute among themselves, would call in the protection not only of the King of France but of their French neighbour, the powerful Count of Asti.

* This was the estimate of Giangaleazzo. The actual revenues proved to be a little less, and an arrangement *à l'amiable* was made between him and his son-in-law (Arch. Nat., K. 554, dossier 6).

But at first the Lombards did not like it. "I Lombardi," says Corio, "furono di mala voglia." What they really dreaded was the succession of Valentine and her French husband to Milan. This is too complicated and intricate a question to dispose of here. I will only say that the Italians believed that in some fashion Giangaleazzo had secured Milan to his daughter, in case he should have no sons, or (as actually happened) in case all his sons should die childless. But the question of the French claim to Milan deserves a history to itself.

IV.

In April, 1387, Valentine of Milan was married by proxy and parole to Louis, Duke of Touraine. The bride was twenty-one, the bridegroom just sixteen; but, as Juvenal des Ursins remarked, "Assez caut, subtil et sage de son aage." But not until the 3rd of June, 1389, did the Lord of Milan send his married daughter to her home in France.

For in France a powerful faction opposed the marriage. The king was little more than a lad; entirely—or, of late, *almost* entirely—submissive to his uncle, the Duke of Burgundy. When the wise King Charles expired in the autumn of 1380, he left the custody of his two children to this younger brother of his, who in all his battles and adventures had been his right-hand man. But the King left the Regency of the Kingdom to the elder of his brothers, the Duke of Anjou. In every sense the brothers were rivals and antagonists; the interests of Anjou lay to the South, the interests of Burgundy to the North.

Anjou was a man of culture, made by nature to be the head of a society of nobles; while Burgundy, the Captain, was the champion of popular rights. In nothing were they at one. When Anjou left the kingdom to conquer Naples, and when the news came to France that he would nevermore return, the supremacy of Burgundy appeared secure. But Anjou had left behind him a successor—not his son, the child-king of Sicily. No, the real successor to his aims and policy was his nephew, the Prince Louis, the younger of the two sons of the dead king.

Little harmony between this lad and his uncle of Burgundy! At ten years old the child fights like a hero at Rosebecque; but the old captain, his tutor, keeps all his smiles for the other nephew, the docile and amiable king. He feels in Louis a spirit of danger, a breath of insubordination. And, in truth, one after the other, the ancient counsellors and servitors of Anjou take shelter in the household of the prince. Burgundy feels that Louis is Anjou Redivivus—he must be kept low. And for this the testament of Charles V. gives ample warrant: for that king, well-named the Wise, feeling that the danger of France lay in the greatness of her princes, had conquered his fatherly heart and decreed that his younger son should have no more than a pension of 12,000 livres a year. But this was not to be. As time went on, and the Regency came to an end, Louis stimulated his placid brother to a sense of independence. And the young king, less Roman than his father, and glad perhaps to feel in the kingdom another power than that of Burgundy, began to

enrich his only brother, giving him the counties of Valois and Beaumont, lands in Cotentin, Caen, Champagne, and Brie; then the Duchy of Touraine; the promise of the inheritance of the old Duchess of Orleans; finally, this rich marriage with Valentine Visconti.

Burgundy resisted with might and main. Not only would this marriage make Louis too strong, but of all brides Valentine was the bride least to his mind. For Burgundy had married two of his own children into the House of Bavaria, and had given a Bavarian princess — the vivacious Isabel — as wife to the young king. Now all these Bavarians were the grandchildren of Bernabò, murdered by the father of Valentine. Also the niece of Burgundy, Béatrix d'Armagnac, "la gaie Armagnageoise," had married in 1382. This Carlo Visconti, Lord of Parma, heir of Bernabò, had been stripped of all his goods by Giangaleazzo and Beatrice, no longer laughing, had returned to eat the bread of exile in her brother's house. Thus the Queen, and Burgundy, and Armagnac, and Berry (the other brother of the dead king) were bound by every instinct of natural anger and honourable vendetta to look upon Giangaleazzo as the spoiler of their kinsmen—of mother, children, niece, or husband—and in their eyes the riches of Milan were the price of blood. Not one of these but hoped to oust the usurper and restore the rightful line. And so for two years they contrived to defer the marriage.*

* See Comte Albert de Circourt, "Le Duc d'Orléans, frère du roi Charles VI.: ses entreprises au dehors du royaume." Paris: Victor Palmé, 1887.

Meanwhile the influence of Burgundy weakened, that of Prince Louis increased, with the king. In the autumn of 1388 the disastrous "Voyage d'Allemagne" deeply discredited Burgundy, its author. In their tent at Corenzich, far from Queen and Court, the two brothers held long colloquies. Not in vain did Louis plead for his bride. In the summer of 1389, Philippe de Florigny was sent into Lombardy to bring her home.

Valentine took away with her an escort of knights, a burden of gold and gems, the possession of Asti, and the promise of Milan. She had in her caskets three hundred thousand pearls of price, beside the pearls upon her gala-dresses. Her plate was valued at more than one hundred thousand marks Parisis. Her jewels, ornaments, and tapestries were estimated at nearly seven hundred thousand golden florins.* Giangaleazzo had found nothing too costly or too radiant for his only daughter. When at last he let her go, he rode with her out of the gates of Pavia, saying never a word of farewell, looking not once into her beloved face, lest he should fall a-weeping. In the saddest hour of her tragic life, Valentine remembered with tears that silent parting.

It was the 17th of August, 1389, according to the dates of the Monk of St. Denis, when Valentine rode

* The florin, the Venetian ducat, and the French franc were interchangeable coins worth about nine-and-eightpence of our money. They are the equivalent of our half-sovereign, the French crown that of our half-guinea; the Burgundian noble being, I think, the only coin that reached the value of the modern guinea. See the tables for 1384–1394 in De Wailly.

into Melun to meet her bridegroom. The King was there as well as all the Court—a Court full of kinsmen for Valentine. The Viscontis counted their alliances with the kings of France back into those mythical ages when Æneas, ancestor of either House, founded the city of Angleria. Valentine found plenty of more recent connections. The King and her husband were both her first cousins, and so was the young King of Sicily; the Dukes of Burgundy and Berry were her uncles. She was also, as I have said, first cousin once removed to the King's young wife, Isabel of Bavaria. She was cousin also to Madame de Montauban, cousin by marriage to Madame d'Armagnac. But these three kinswomen looked on her with horror, and all her splendour seemed to them unholy spoil fresh from the unclean hands of her father, the triumphant assassin of his kinsmen.

The jealousy and suspicion of the Queen must have been the earliest greeting of Valentine at Melun. Queen Isabel was the idol of the Court. Radiantly beautiful, eighteen years old, she was not satisfied with the devotion of her husband. Charles VI. was a gentle, kind-hearted, stalwart young man, at two-and-twenty already rather bald, clear of eye and cheek, generous, slow-witted, unapt to State and dignity. He was lovable and sweet in temper; "he emitted, like an odoriferous flower, the ingenuity of his perfect character," writes the anonymous Monk of St. Denis. But at his side, more brilliant and more eloquent than he, rode the first knight of chivalry, the King's only brother, Louis, Duke of Touraine. This young man was eighteen years old, extremely

handsome, so witty and so wise that in the University of Paris there were no doctors who were proof against his *bonne memoire et belle loquelle*. Often at night, in the Hôtel de Saint Paul at Paris, he and the young Marshal Boucicault would sit into the grey hours of the morning, devising and arguing the nature of the soul, or making rondels, songs, and ballads. Other days and nights were spent in less innocent amusements; for the beautiful Duke of Touraine was so irresistible a lover that popular fancy endowed him with a magic wand and an enchanted ring, making him absolute master of all women. None the less—though in a knight it were more noble to succour than to enslave fair ladies—the Duke was considered (a woman has pronounced it) "the very refuge and retreat of chivalry." And the charm of his youth and beauty, of his rhetoric and laughter, of his gentle manners and brilliant knightliness, still exhales from the dusty pages of Christine de Pisan and Juvenal des Ursins. These two loved him. But the hostile Monstrelet, the critical Monk of St. Denis, the unenthusiastic Froissart—even these assure us of his enchanting presence.

According to Burcarius the King was handsomer than his young brother; but we must allow for a natural Burgundian hostility to Louis, and a natural Burgundian preference for force and valour, fresh colour, sweet temper, good humour, and all vigorous northern qualities, in preference to the subtler charms of their enemy. The stalwart Fleming thinks the King the finest man at Court, and handsomer than any there, far handsomer than his wife, "jolie et

avenante," indeed, but "basse et brunette": fatal defects in the eyes of a Fleming! Her indisputable empire over men he ascribes not to her face, but to her lively manners. "Folle et légère," was she:

> "Touse n'y avoit tant jonette
> Plaine de sy grant gaiété
> Ny de sy grant joliveté
> Sy amoureuse, ne sy lie,
> Que cette Bergère jolie.' *

As for Louis, the Burgundian has no word in favour of this melancholy free-lover, this *Tristifer* (for such is the name he goes by among shepherds) who sins with no pleasure in sin; who spends his days in the pursuit of love, yet keeps a heart of iron; whose joys are such as are not to be found in the real world, but the fantastic joys of art, repugnant to the Philistine:

> "Tristifer, tristièce portant.
> . . . Et tout fut-il jolis,
> Trop sembloit-il mirancolis;
> Qui le coer a plus dur que fer.
> . . . .
> Bien nouvelette chanson
> S'en va tout chantant à hault son,
> Qu'il avoit, par un soir bruyant
> Et bel, rimoié en riant."

Thus the Burgundian . . . unaware that this portrait

* Le Pastoralet. A Burgundian satire, in the form of a Pastoral, written by one Burcarius in the first half of the fifteenth century, and published of late years in the Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove's collection of Belgian chronicles.

of his enemy is the only one that awakens curiosity and stimulates the fancy. And, by way of adding a blacker touch than all, he tells us that this singing Tristifer is the paramour of the gay Queen Belligère.

I have said that Louis was held to possess an unearthly ring, a magic wand, of desire. For a perfect knight it was said that he had put them to strange uses. He had fascinated with his wand, he had bewitched with the circle of his ring, the young wife of his brother, the beautiful Queen Isabel. And he was the bridegroom of Valentine Visconti. Queen Isabel was at Melun to greet her new kinswoman. We can imagine with what critical eyes she ran her over. Valentine, though not beautiful, was a novel and irradiating vision in her veil of gems. She was wise too; she could talk with her husband over the poems he made, the verses of Lord Salisbury and Maître Eustache Deschamps, the romances of Wenzel of Luxembourg, or of Maître Jean d'Arras, all the literature of the Court. She could argue with him, this subtle Lombard, in the tenuous and fanciful dissertations that he loved. Queen Isabel could not endure to see this stranger, by reason of her splendour and her novelty become the centre of attraction. The marriage festival was scarcely over when Isabel persuaded her husband to ordain a greater festivity for herself. She had been married four years, she was known by sight to every clerk in the Rue St. Denis, yet the King, obedient to her behest, proclaimed the Royal Entry of the Queen into Paris.

V.

This Paris that Valentine entered as a stranger was a beautiful city. The streets and bridges had been largely rebuilt by her uncle, Charles the Wise. Between the new Bastille and the river he had raised an immense royal palace, the Hôtel de St. Paul. Close at hand stood the Palais de Tournelles, the great hotel of the King of Sicily, the Hôtel Clisson, and the Hôtel de Behaigne, where the husband of Valentine sometimes lived. A little farther off (in the Rue de Turbigo) the castle of the Duke of Burgundy still rears its out-dated menace. On the left bank of the Seine another group of palaces surrounded Nôtre Dame. At the extremity of the city stood the Louvre. Rebuilt by Charles the Wise, it was endowed by him with a library of nine hundred and ten volumes (chiefly illuminated missals, legends, miracles, and treatises on astrology). There a silver lamp burned always day and night in the service of students, to whom the library was ever open.

Paris was a beautiful city; but it seemed a paradise upon the occasion of the royal entry. The Rue St. Denis was draped from top to bottom in green and crimson silk scattered with stars. Under the gateway angels sang in a starry heaven, and to the sweet sound of instruments little children played a miracle. There were towers and stages raised along the streets, where the legend of Troy-town and other pleasant matters were enacted. There were fountains also, flowing with milk or flowing with claret. Maidens, in rich chaplets of flowers, stood beside them and out of golden

cups they gave the passers-by to drink, and sang melodiously the while; up and down this magic city went the citizens' wives and daughters in long robes of gold and purple. The citizens themselves were clad in green, the royal officers in rose colour. But all these splendours paled and dwindled when the royal procession came in sight. In the middle, in an open litter, sat the Queen, the beautiful, smiling idol of the feast; she was dressed in a gown of silk, sewn over with French lilies worked in gold. Behind her, in painted cars, went the great ladies of the Court. Only the Duchess of Touraine had no litter; Valentine rode on a fair palfrey, marvellously caparisoned; she went on one side of the Queen's litter among the royal dukes. The people of Paris, says Froissart, were as anxious to see the new Duchess as the Queen, whom indeed they had often seen. For Madame Valentine was immensely rich, the daughter of a great conqueror, and she had only just come out of Lombardy, a mysterious country where wonderful things came to pass. What impression did Valentine make on the people of Paris, pressing and craving to see the foreign duchess?

Which of her gala-dresses did she wear? The scarlet one sewn thick with pearls and diamonds, with a cap of pearls and scarlet for her dusky hair? Or the robe of gold brocade with sleeves and headdress of woven pearls? Or the flashing crown of balasses and sapphires, and the dress of scarlet sewn with jewels and embroidered with pale blue borage flowers? In any of these this splendid Italian stranger must have appeared to the burghers of Paris

as a vision of Southern luxury, of mysterious outlandish enchantment. At least it is certain that never after they looked upon her as a mere mortal woman. Just at that season every one was reading the "Mélusine" of Maître Jean d'Arras. Valentine of Milan with her fairy splendours, her subtle wisdom, her Lombard traditions—Valentine, with the Visconti snake on her escutcheon—must have seemed to these Parisians much such another mysterious serpent-woman, another Mélusine. For the Italian character, never fanatic and yet so prone to spiritual passions; seldom bestial, yet so guilty of unnatural vices—Italy has ever been a mystery, a hateful enigma to the practical French; and of all Italians the Lombards, the border people, are most unlike their Gallic neighbours. A century later, when the French poured into Italy, no blazing mountain of Vesuvius, no wonderful Venetian city swimming in the seas, no antique and glorious ruins of Rome, so much astonished the foreign soldiers as the learned and subtle ladies of Lombardy. Those later chroniclers who have been in Italy relate with wonder their fables of ecstatic virgins, and gifted women wiser than their sex; they have seen one Anna, a woman forty years of age, who never eats, drinks, or sleeps, and who bears on her body the mystical wounds of Christ, breaking out and bleeding afresh on every Friday. In Milan, a demoiselle Trivulce, "de son grant jeune aage," wrote letters in Latin and was eloquent in oratory; "elle estoit aussi poeticque" (adds the author of La Mer des Chroniques) "et scavoit moult bien disputer avecques clercs et docteurs." And also

she was virtuous, so that her holy life seemed a thing to marvel on. At Venice, Maître Nicole Gilles encountered a certain Virgin Cassandra, the daughter of Angelo Fideli, a maiden expert in the seven liberal arts and in theology, all of which matters she expounded in public lectures. At Quiers, near Asti, a "jeune pucelle," the daughter of Maître Jehan Solier, received the king with a public and most eloquent oration. Learned and subtle and virtuous as these Lombard ladies were, enthusiastic and spiritual as were many of their countrymen, yet this strange Italy, where the women taught the men, where Jesus Christ in Florence was the official head of the Republic, inspired a secret dread and horror in the French. Like men in an enchanted country, they feared what might lurk behind the shows of things. Above all, the French could never rid themselves of a haunting suspicion of poison—poison and sorcery, underhand and terrible weapons, such as these frank and passionate Gauls associated with the subtlety and wisdom of the people they had conquered. "And yet," says Commines, "I must here speak somewhat in honour of the Italian nation, because we never found in all this voyage that they *did* seek to do us harm by poison, and yet, if they had chosen, we could hardly have avoided it."

This attitude of suspicion towards Italy, of reluctant admiration, characterized the French of 1494. Minus the admiration, it is quite as significant of the French to-day; and in 1387 the same distrust was there, but sharper, more anxious, and the same wonder, but intensified. Valentine the Italian, seemed to these

alert, honest, practical Parisians a marvel of strangeness and wisdom; but to them these attributes suggested chiefly a fatal potency for evil.

And, in truth, there was in Italy a wickedness such as for another hundred years should not penetrate into France. The Italians were a nation of secret poisoners; and the French bourgeois vaguely guessed that this splendid young lady was acquainted with a world terribly different from their ingenuous and turbulent Paris. No need for turbulence in Italy. Valentine's father poisoned the uncle who, for his part, had, poisoned his own brother. And Giangaleazzo, who, as Corio relates, had been nearly poisoned by Antonio della Scala, disposed of that enemy by the self-same means. The Florentines * (but theirs is the evidence of an enemy) said he paid his official poisoner a hundred florins monthly. These it was murmured were the traditions of the new Duchess.

Thus, after all, Queen Isabel played but the second part in the pageant of her entry. Soon, however, she forgot her jealousy of the Italian—a jealousy which on that holiday kept her sick in her chamber, while Valentine danced with Touraine and the King in the royal ball below. But Valentine was no rival of the beautiful, bright little Queen: she was a persistent, ambitious, and devoted woman, never vain and never timid. From the first she lavished on her boyish husband that passionate devotion of an elder woman which asks no return from the radiant young

* Lamansky: "Secrets de l' Etat de Venise," pp. 157–159. Also "Archivio di Firenze," Signori Legazione Commissioni, &c. Filza 28, folio 7 t.

creature she adores. She did not grudge Louis the love of Isabel, if, indeed, that love was his. A stranger thing happened: Valentine united with her rival to push the fortunes of Touraine. These two women were ever together, ever scheming, and planning the welfare of the unfaithful husband of the one, whom an unbroken tradition has regarded as the criminal lover of the other. An unnatural league; but it served to strengthen Touraine.

For Valentine and Isabel alike had the ear of the King. Charles VI., a little slow, a little dull, neglected in his Court, betrayed by his wife for his more brilliant brother—this gentle, kindly, unimportant creature was irresistibly drawn to his sister-in-law. Of all her royal kinsfolk in France, the King was the only one who from the first had welcomed Valentine. "My dear sister, my beloved sister," the words were ever on his lips. Valentine, like him, was set aside; like him she suffered. She, too, was patient and gentle; but she was strong, she was prudent. The King of France was a great heavy lad, over-boyish for his years, loving jests and disguises, hating ceremony, and only very dimly feeling the wrongs that perplexed him; he sought from the sweet and quiet Italian her protection no less than her compassion.

In 1390, at Montpellier, the King could not support his absence from her. "I am too far from the Queen and Madame Valentine," he said to his brother. "Let us ride post haste to Paris." Unaccompanied and for a wager, they rode all the way, four nights and nearly five days in the saddle. . . . A little later the physicians said that such violent exercises as this had unsettled the feeble reason of the King.

VI.

In 1391, the young Duke of Touraine acquired the succession of the Duchess of Orleans. He was now as rich as he was ambitious. Could the old king, his father, have seen his eminence and his ambition, he would have risen from his grave, and have returned to the salvation of France. But the dust was in his ears and eyes, and it was not to be so.

For some time the King had been ailing with a hot fever. He was, says the Monk of St. Denis, strange, languishing, and bewildered. When, in the summer of 1392, the French invaded Brittany, the Dukes, his uncles, conjured him to remain at home. But Charles was not to be persuaded. He started with them upon the long, fatiguing journey.

On the 5th of August, near the town of Mans, after some hours of riding in armour under a beating sun, the royal party passed the Lepers'-village. A beggar, a leper, dressed in rags, the outcast of the world, the lowest human thing, came out and accosted the young King of France: "Go no farther, noble King, they betray you!" The King was startled, and though the Royal Guards interfered they could not at once shake off the loathsome prophet. Clinging to the King's bridle, the leper cried again, "Go no farther, noble King, they betray you!" . . . They betray you! Louis and Isabel, his nearest and dearest, what else did they? The King said nothing.

About an hour afterwards, suddenly, the King set upon his brother, his spear a-tilt, as hunters hunt a stag. . . . The more distant of the royal party

thought the King had spied a hare or a hart in the forest. . . . Then, as the truth dawned, there was a dreadful scene. Cries, wounds, men falling from their horses, and a fanatic madman who none the less was still a sacred and irresistible presence! The King of France was furiously and murderously mad.

Four men were slain, others saved themselves by simulating death. Orleans fortunately was not hurt at all. For four days the King's frenzy lasted, with fits of delirium and lapses into death-like exhaustion. The most cruel part of his sickness was the evident anguish of his spirit. "Will no one pluck out of my heart the dagger that my fair brother of Orleans has planted there?" the poor mad youth would cry; and he would mutter to himself, "I must kill him! I *must* kill him!" It was useless to instruct the people that there is no reason in the sick hatred of a distempered mind. Nor would they find sufficient motive in the rumoured unfaithfulness of Isabel with Louis. They sought a darker, a more subtle explanation, and their suspicions were fostered, for political ends, by the enemies of Orleans—the faction of his uncle, the Duke of Burgundy.

For when the King recovered from his frenzy, his mind remained weak and disabled. It was necessary to hand over to his uncles for a while the direction of affairs. This made the strongest of them, Philip, Duke of Burgundy, more than ever strong; he was in fact, though not in form, the regent. Against his rule one voice was ever raised in protest, the voice of the young ambitious brother of the King.

Louis of Orleans was now twenty-one years of age; through his marriage and the gifts of the King he had become formidably rich; through the weakness of the King he was formidably powerful. He was the nearest to the throne and he desired the regency. But the people suspected Orleans; he had too much to gain by the death or the incapacity of his brother. The people, in their passionate pity for the gentle monarch they adored, began to hate and fear the Queen and Orleans. In later days they did not scruple to declare their misgivings, but at first they dared not directly accuse the Queen, they would not directly accuse the young, beautiful Louis, their pride from his childhood, eloquent, religious, gay, slow to anger. With Juvenal they found him "beau prince et gratieux;" and, like Christine, they accounted him, "en ces jeunes faiz et en toutes choses très-avenant . . . car il aime les bons . . . nul fellonie ni cruauté en luy." But he was young; he had been led away (Juvenal finds the phrase for them) "*by the means of those who were near to him.* . . . He had strange youthful follies that I will not declare. . . . *There were those about him,* young people, who induced him to do many things he had better have left undone." This vague and mysterious excuse is the veil of a terrible accusation. The people began to say that the Duke of Orleans was a sorcerer.

The King mad; the King's brother a wizard! There was a contagion of horror in France. "Many nobles and poor people," writes the Monk of St. Denis, "began to change and sicken with the same strange malady that had attacked the King." The

fanatic terror of supernatural evil spread and deepened.

Things, at that critical season, fell out unfortunately for Orleans. On the 29th of January, 1393, there was a wedding festival at the Hôtel de St. Paul for one of Queen Isabel's German maids of honour. The bride was a widow, and thrice a widow; therefore a subject for the grotesque licence of the age. At night, in the great hall among the dancers, suddenly there burst in a company of six satyrs dressed in tight linen vests, with flakes of tow fastened with pitch upon their backs. These hideous merry-makers sprang and danced about the bride, with leaps and gestures, in a sort of diabolic frenzy. Five of them were chained together, the sixth disported loose. The sixth was the King. Stung by some unlucky madcap prompting, Orleans took a flaming torch from its bearer, and held it close to the face of one of the maskers to see who he was. A flake of fire from the torch dropped among the tow and pitch. Up and down the hall, dancing a wilder and more terrible saraband, the flaming satyrs went. Two were burned to ashes, two died of their burns in agony, one saved himself by leaping into a water-butt. The King was rescued by the Duchess of Berri, who wrapped him in her mantle. But the danger and the fearful spectacle had upset his tottering reason. The King was mad again.

The people were furious against Orleans. Had Charles been burned, his brother's life must have answered for it; for the people loved the King. The party of Burgundy—the popular party—did not

hesitate to accuse the unfortunate young Duke of a fiendish plot to murder his brother. It was in vain that Louis raised a magnificent chapel of marble in the Church of the Celestines, to expiate his involuntary guilt. The people murmured that the Duke of Orleans went too often to the Celestines. It was said he went there every day. So much devotion was uncanny in so wild a liver.

Charitable souls like Demoiselle Christine declared in vain—"C'est impossible que son âme et ses mœurs n'en vaillent mieux." Charitable souls are rare. The mass of the people did not hesitate to say that Louis visited the Celestines the better to conspire with a certain monk there—an old counsellor of his father's —one Sire Philippe de Mézières. This person was acknowledged to be wise, experienced, able, and a man of science, according to the age. "Cestui vieil solitaire" for forty years had been the counsellor of princes. For thirty years he had been the life and soul of the policy of Cyprus, of Rhodes, of the Christian East. Then disgraced by an ungrateful king—Pierre II. de Lusignan—he took refuge in France, bringing to the service of Charles V. his enthusiasm, his political wisdom, his minute and extensive acquaintance with the Courts of Italy and the East. In 1379 he entered the Convent of the Celestines in Paris; not too secluded to remain the trusted counsellor of Charles V., and in his turn, of his son Louis of Orleans. But though the good Sire was a monk, the crowd doubted of his religion, for it was common rumour that he said there was no truth in sorcery. Let him say it! Sire Philippe

de Mézières was none the less no judicious companion for the Duke of Orleans. The Sire had lived too long in Lombardy: "a country," as Juvenal describes it, "where they practice magic and the casting of spells."

About the same time a malignant rumour grew in France concerning the father of Valentine. People said the Seigneur of Milan had asked the French Ambassador for news of the King. "He is very well," replied the Frenchman. Whereupon Visconti grew pale, and staggered. "He is the Devil!" he said, with great admiration; or, according to another version, "Diabolicum recitas et quod est impossibile —You tell me a diabolic thing, and one that is impossible! *The King can not be well!*"

Now, it was generally known in Italy that the Duke of Milan, like every other successful prince or Signory, was a secret poisoner. But in France a more terrible and a yet more hateful accusation was rumoured against him. The people began to whisper that the Duke of Milan was a wizard.

VII.

The King was mad again; he had fallen into the first of innumerable relapses. Henceforth, for thirty years, any moment of too poignant feeling would throw him back in agony and madness. At such times he suffered much. It would happen (says the Monk of St. Denis), that as he sat in his council chamber, receiving his ambassadors and discoursing with sense and clearness, a sudden shudder would

pass over him, the actual world would drift into oblivion. Again the forest near Mans, the leper's warning, would rise on his tormented vision. He would shriek out for help against his enemies, and yet, poor king, be still aware these enemies were phantasms. At such moments he would cry and wail and sob, till all the Court fell a-weeping to hear him. "O not madness. Death, any pain, anything but madness!" and joining his hands he would look eagerly in face after face of his kinsmen. "I pray you, for the love of Christ, if any of you be party to this magic, then let me die at once and end it." But no prayers avail, and as the fantastic world of lunacy gradually eclipsed the receding truth, the King's last entreaty showed the unaltered sweetness of his tormented nature. "Keep away all the knives," he would cry. "I had rather die than hurt any one." For no lapse of time, no suffering effaced in his gentle character the stamp of that terrible moment of Mans when he had awoken to find his innocent hands stained henceforth for ever with innocent and loyal blood.

While the King wailed in desperate protest against his oncoming madness, all the Court wept with him. But, once that eclipse accomplished, the Court forgot the King. Part of the royal palace of St. Paul's had been turned into a safe asylum. There the King lived, sometimes for many weeks unwashed, eaten with filth and vermin, suffering no attendant to approach him. He was then a mere wild beast, tormented with canine hunger, fierce, suspicious, and sometimes wild with fear. Then he would pace from

end to end of his apartments, fleeing his imaginary pursuers, until he dropt exhausted in senseless lethargy.

But more often, and especially in the first years of his illness, he was not sunk so low as this. He was then an aimless, laughing, boyish imbecile. He was no longer the King even in his own fancy; he had forgotten himself as others had forgotten him. Did he see his own arms or the Queen's emblazoned anywhere upon the walls, he would smear out that heraldry, laughing the while and dancing in a burlesque, unseemly fashion. "These are not my arms. I am not King Charles. My name is George," he would cry, "and my arms are a lion pierced with a spear." The poor King was himself transfixed with that intangible spear his fair brother of Orleans had planted in his heart for ever. But in his madness, his jealousy had undergone a subtle change. Sometimes he could not endure the sight or mention of the Queen and Orleans, but more often he utterly forgot them. Once they brought Isabel into his presence. He shook his head and swore he did not know the lady.

There was in all the world one only creature whose presence shed a little balm and solace on his unhappy lunacy. This was his sister-in-law, Madame Valentine. She was the only person he ever fully recognized. Absent and present he called upon her, "Oh, my dearest sister! Oh, my beloved sister!" and if Valentine left him a single day unvisited, the poor king would wander up and down for hours in aimless regret and complaining.

Valentine was kind and pitiful. Although at this time she was ailing (her second son was born in August, 1393), she did not fear to bring her delicate magnificence into the filth and peril of the mad king's presence. For hours she would sit with him, playing at cards : those painted Saracen Naibi which Covelluzzo noticed at Viterbo (the first known in Europe) in 1379. Perhaps Valentine had brought them out of Italy; they were the only pastime of the haggard king; and for hours the painted images of Death, Love, Fortune, Madness, and the Angel, would silently fall from the hands of these two unhappy people, keeping each other melancholy company in the dismantled chambers of the barred and altered palace.

Valentine was ill herself; she was a woman; and yet she was not afraid of this tall, broad-shouldered young man of twenty-five, subject to violent mania, who in one fearful paroxysm had slain four men in armour. His attendants dared not come too near. But Valentine seemed to bear a charmed life, she did not even tremble. This unnatural courage of hers, this fascination, this mastery which she exercised upon their king. . . . all this was terribly explicable to the people of Paris.

Who was this lady?—Valentine of Milan. "Now," says Juvenal, "her father was the Duke of Milan,* who was a Lombard, and in his country they practise magic and the casting of spells." "The common

* Giangaleazzo in 1395 obtained the title and investiture of the Duchy of Milan from Wenzel, King of the Romans, for 100,000 florins.

people," says the Monk, "declared the King was bewitched. They accused the Duke of Milan, and in confirmation of this ridiculous proposition they said the Duchess of Orleans was the only person the King recognized or cherished in his sickness. They did not scruple to say she was a witch, though that so generous a lady should commit so great a crime is a fact that never has been proved." "The King's physicians, arioles, and charmers," says Froissart, "affirmed the King was poisoned or bewitched by craft of sorcery; they said they knew it by the spirits that had showed it to them. Of these diviners, arioles, and charmers, certain were burned at Paris and at Avignon. They spake so much, and said the Duchess Valentine of Orleans, daughter to the Duke of Milan, had bewitched the King."

In those days the accusation of sorcery was terrible and ominous. To bewitch the King was the most damnable of crimes, for witchcraft in itself was treason against God. It was indeed no less than taking out of heaven the tremendous issues of life and death, apportioning them with profane and mortal hands, and breaking the heavenly order of the universe. God was mocked. This side of sorcery excited the horror of theologians, but it was not this that infuriated with helpless terror the shuddering populace. We know how the Polynesian islanders will die to-day of a fatal langour if they believe their enemy has prayed against them. The citizens of Paris in the Middle Ages died as easily. "Throughout the kingdom," says the Monk of St. Denis,

"many nobles and poor people are attacked with the same strange malady as the King's." A contagion of fear paralysed the sources of life. "For they can bewitch you," said, in 1407, Maître Jean Petit, a very learned doctor in theology; "and they can bewitch the King, and make him die in a very subtle manner, quite unapparent, by the casting of a spell." "A word is enough," said two Augustine friars who suffered for sorcery in 1397, "a word, a touch; it is no natural malady." To those who suffered, and saw their near and dear ones suffer of this incurable, inexorable enchantment, there was no death too cruel for the wizard.

The Duke of Milan was a very powerful magician. By spells and sorcery he, the weakest of his clan, had made himself the most astute and potent of all the princes of the West; by spells and sorcery he would make his daughter queen of France. "Il n'y avait qu'une bouche à clore," said Jean Petit. Valentine, the people thought, was helping her father, for the Duchess of Orleans was a witch.

The powers of the Prince of the Air were in high places. Valentine was not only protected by Satan—not only served by Hermas and Astramin the two livid demons of Montjoy that obeyed the House of Orleans—she was also sheltered by the effulgence of the throne. Every power, every protection was hers. Hell and earth obeyed her, and heaven smiles upon the sins of princes. Yet with the cruel heroism of pity the people of Paris rose against her, pouring down the streets, reaching out their fanatic hands to tear in pieces no omnipotent demon in a violent aureole of

flame, but a pale neglected foreign woman far from home. They determined to save the King, and at last the peril of the duchess grew so great that Marshal Sancerre and many other nobles advised her husband to send her out of Paris. So in great pomp, nowise abashed, but with all the splendour of a royal progress, Valentine left the city. She went to a fair castle of her husband's near Pontoise, and then to Neufchatel upon the Loire. She went alone, for Orleans was kept by State affairs in Paris. There was a subtle political reason for the irritation of France against the Milanese. In the complex recesses of the human heart an actual terror of supernatural evil, a crusader's passion to avenge the honour of God, may co-exist with the most sordid calculations of a worldly advantage to be gained. It was not only for the love of God that the Jews and Moors of Spain, the Protestants of Flanders, the monasteries of England, were made to enrich their persecutors. It was not entirely for thirty pieces of silver that Judas delivered a heretic to the secular arm. And it was the easier to condemn the Duke of Milan that he was not only a wizard, but the political rival of France for the rich suzerainty of Genoa.

VIII.

The French had counted upon Giangaleazzo Visconti rather as a captain than as a rival. Visconti had looked upon the French as the tools of his ambition, and not as serious competitors. In reality each was in pursuit of the same thing; each desired to be supreme in Italy.

Visconti had easily acquired the direction of his son-in-law's policy. It is not surprising. A lad of eighteen, poor, kept under, systematically neglected, Orleans before his marriage had known little of power, nothing of supremacy. He was nominally Duke of Touraine; but his estates were administered by the King. Until a few months before his marriage he had not even a house of his own, but lived with his retinue in a corner of his brother's palace. In February, 1389, he appeared for the first time at the Royal Council. Valentine brought him wealth, consideration, and ambition; for, with the possession of Asti, and under the guidance of his father-in-law, the young Duke began to dream of battles and signiories in Italy.

Visconti was very willing to adopt his daughter's husband in place of the clever and valiant son he should have had. His own son was a baby at the breast. And Orleans brought him not only a clear young mind, a fresh and eager will and the courage that the great Visconti never had, but also the influence of France. Thus the great Ghibelline saw within his reach the support of the Guelfs. To reconcile all parties for his own interest was ever the aim of this unrivalled statesman, as magically gifted to make peace as to foment a discord. Ghibelline and Guelf, Emperor and King of France, Pope and Antipope, aye, even Orleans and Burgundy, should join hands to fight his battles.

His first move was a whisper of ambition in the ear of his son-in-law. And Louis forgot his love-making and ballad-making, his jousting and feasting,

and turned to other thoughts. Asti was his; Asti should be the centre of his operations, and in swiftness and silence a French army gathered in Asti.

In 1389, the very year of Orleans' marriage, there was peace with England; hence, leisure in Court and camp; hence troops of riders and men-at-arms infesting every countryside, preying on the ruined peasants, and loitering hungry for another war. Nothing easier than to enlist a company! In 1389 Orleans sent to his new county François, Seigneur de Chassenage, as governor with twenty men-at-arms and two chamberlains, each with twenty men-at-arms and thirty archers. Fifty-five other men-at-arms and as many archers were added to these, and formed the nucleus of a rapidly increasing army. By the end of June more men-at-arms and squires joined the service. Enguerrand de Coucy, Lieutenant of the Duke and Captain-General *ès parties d'Italie*, went to keep his state at Asti in July.*

From this moment, long pages of the manuscript account book of Chassenage are filled with lists of captains, men-at-arms, and archers. Archers under Braguet, archers, under Viezville, a concentration of devoted Orleanists, once Angevines, in Italy. Italian names, also, begin to crop up in the French harvest: Messire Othe Tusque, des parties d'Italie, Messire Jehan Visconti, escuier, Messire Aloyset de Plaisance, also Luquin Rusque, Francesquin Martin demourant à Pavey, Hannibal Lommelin of Genoa and his troop,

* Arch. Nat. (K K. 315 f^os^. 9–52): "Notes à compter faiz à certaines gens d'armes et archiers retenus par Monsieur le Duc à son service avant la venue de M. de Coucy ès parties d'Ytalie."

others from as far as Florence and Venice. Then a great name, commander of many others, a name that means business : *Messire Facin Can and his company.*

The red towers of Asti—still here and there existing, a bouquet of wine-red stems slenderly streaking the pale and radiant Lombard sky—the red towers of Asti, innumerable then, grew home-like and familiar to many a French lord. No dreary exile this—large houses, wine-red also ("non hanno acqua ma vino per impetrargli," laugh the men of Alba), beautiful churches, a rich plain, streaked with the wide Tanaro, and girt with hills. At night, the Alps come out, invisible by day; they appear at sundown even as a rose-red heavenly wall divinely dividing the Lombard country from the unseen land of France.

Yet here are the French and quite at home. Plenty of wine, red and white; beautiful women; plenty of money. Orleans pays fifteen francs a month to every man-at-arms (but a man-at-arms, we must remember, is more than a man, being at least the soldier himself, his page and his varlet), eight francs a month to every archer; two hundred francs a month to Chassenage and the chamberlains; four hundred and fifty to Enguerrand de Coucy. All this serves at least to bring wealth and custom to Puielhez, mine host of the Cross of Asti, who supplies the wine. But for what other purpose does Orleans thus dissipate his new-got treasure? The "Dance of Fools," sculptured on a wall in the market place, by some gay ironic hand not long dead then, looks down with silent bells and silent laughing lips that answer not.

In August, Orleans sends one of his men (Blaru),

on a secret embassy to his father-in-law at Milan, another (Craon) to the Antipope Clement.* They have scarcely gone when he sends another (Garancières) to Pavia. In February of the next year (1390) there is much prate at Court of a voyage to Italy—voyage being then the polite name for an invasion—in order to establish Pope Clement in his see of Rome.

And now, little by little, the great plan disengages itself—audacious, simple, as befits the brain of Visconti. Orleans and Burgundy themselves start for Pavia, and arrive there in March, 1391. Brilliant Visconti, to have persuaded Burgundy that the expansion of Orleans in Italy will leave him free to extend his grasp at home! Great things also, as we know from a passage in Walsingham,† are vaguely held out to Burgundy. As for Orleans, there are no bounds to his ardour; he defrays the entire expense of the journey, 60,000 francs, lavished magnificently to astound his new ally and his subjects of Asti. The Royal Dukes remain but a week in Lombardy, and then return—recalled by rumours of Armagnac's disturbance. But the week was long enough.

The first step of the affair was to persuade Giangaleazzo Visconti to give in his adherence to the Antipope Clement. The Lord of Milan was still in name an Urbanite; but he had suffered the Antipope Clement to arrange the marriage of his daughter and to grant the dispensation that made it lawful; and his wife Caterina was a devoted Clementine. Visconti gives it to be understood that he will fight for Clement

* De Circourt, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

† Walsingham, "Historia Anglicana," vol. ii. p. 201.

if it be made worth his while. Meanwhile the king takes fire:—honest, practical, religious, the idea of thus forcibly putting an end to heresy and schism greatly commends itself to him. There were three Royal visits to Avignon that year. The Antipope suggests to Charles VI. an Imperial Crown for a second Charlemagne.* Froissart hears of the royal intention, "de mener notre Saint Père à Rome," and on the 23rd of February, 1391, the King signs a quittance of 2,000 francs, "pour nous aider à abiller et mestre est estat pour aller en la compagnie d'icelui seigneur au voyage qu'il a intencion de faire au païs de Lombardie."

But nothing can be done without the indispensable Visconti. What is his plan? At first he holds back, loving by nature the attitude of suspense. But in 1392 the moment came to decide. Armagnac at that moment was invading Italy in defence of the rights of his sister Beatrice and the elder branch of Visconti. He suffered defeat, indeed, and death at the hands of Milan, but not before he had inflicted so severe a check upon his victor that Giangaleazzo no longer saw his triumph clear. Nay, unwelcome as the ghost of Banquo at the board of Macbeth, the pale figures of the dead Armagnac, the once laughing Beatrice, the poisoned Bernabò, intrude themselves between him and his end. Do not such sights as these clamour for revenge?—and Armagnac and Beatrice have a living brother; Bernabò Visconti has left a troop of sons. Milan may yet be snatched from his grasp. He is not

* Clairambault. sceaux. vol. cxiii. p. 8821. See De Circourt, *op. cit.*

safe in Lombardy, and he would fain be King of Italy. But how to obtain that crown? Already Armagnac has forced him to restore Padua to the Carraresi. And Florence, the irreconcileable enemy, is grouping round her a league of hostile states. In August, 1392, Florence, Padua, Faenza, Ravenna—a little later the Malatestas and Forli—are united against Visconti. He is not safe in Milan till he wear the crown of Florence too.

Then he sends to the Pope and to the King of France and announces his plan. How did the Lord of Milan hear of the secret Adrian project? Did Anjou, passing through Pavia, drop a word? Did one of the many Angevines sheltered in the house of Orleans, familiar with Asti and Milan, broach the plan? We know not, but this was the scheme of Visconti: *Naples for Anjou; Rome for the Frenchman Clement VII.; Adria,* that is to say the centre of Italy from Spoleto to Ferrara, and from Massa to Ancona, *Adria for Orleans, the North for Visconti.* That is to say, Italy for the father of Valentine and his allies.* As Wal-

* For all this question of the kingdom of Adria, too vast for this incidental line, see the excellent paper of M. Paul Durrieu in the "Revue des Questions Historiques" for July, 1880; also the scarce volume of Champollion-Figeac," Louis et Charles, Ducs d'Orléans," Paris, 1844; and especially the box of Manuscripts in the Paris National Archives labelled Carton J. 495. I may also indicate an interesting passage in Walsingham's "Historia Anglicana," vol. ii. p. 201, communicated to me by Comte Albert de Circourt, "Item Dominus Papa significat Regi per prædictum nuncio, qualiter Rex Franciæ et Antipapa pacta inierunt hinc inde: Videlicet quod idem Rex, per fortitudinum Ducum (Burgundiæ et Turoniæ, poni faciat Antipapem in Sedem Petri et Antipapa promisit Regem Imperio coronare, et Duci Bur-

singham tells us Visconti secured for himself the double crown of Tuscany and Lombardy. But in the very moment when the reluctant Pope (less hasty and less egoistic now than at Sperlonga), had promised thus to alienate the Church lands as the price of his restoration, a Divine Hand, as it must have seemed, interposed to save the Church. On the 28th of August, 1394, Pope and Cardinals had approved the Schedule of Orleans. A fortnight later, on the 16th of September, suddenly, Clement VII. died at Avignon.

His successor was less able; and the scheme of Adria was abandoned. Valentine would never reign as Queen of Adria. Yet, as Duchess of Genoa, she would be nearer home. Then in all manner of subtle and secret ways Orleans and Visconti immediately manœuvred to secure the Ligurian province. Armies in the field, diplomats in the Cabinet, worked for one end alone. In November, 1394, Savona had submitted to Orleans. Now Genoa must be gained. The young Duke had already a strong faction in his favour. The Lomellini, Spinole, Flischi, figure in the rolls of Orleans' army.* But, at the same time, they were intriguing with an unsuspected enemy.† In August, 1395, the Doge of Genoa sent to Paris offering to

gundiæ) magnalia et investiet Ducem Turoniæ de omnibus terris ecclesiæ in partibus Italiæ, et *quendam alium* coronare Regem Tusciæ et Lombardiæ, et Ducem Andexaciæ (Andegaviæ) firmare in Regno Siciliæ." The passage in brackets exists only in the Brit. Mus. MS.

* "Arch. Nat.," K K. 315.

† "Arch. Nat.," J. 497, No. 15. February, 1392, Lomellini, Flisco, and other nobles of Genoa sign an instrument offering Genoa to the King of France.

Charles himself the suzerainty of Genoa. There was in France a strong current of popular opinion running in favour of Italian colonization. Why should Orleans have Genoa?—asked the people. Why not the King? Why not all of us? Why not France? The King, as we know, was never a very solid creature. Honest, but feeble, he let himself be dominated by the nearest influence. The Duke of Burgundy was in Paris, and he, it is probable, persuaded Charles * to abandon his brother and to accept the gift of the Doge. In October, Genoa was united to the Crown of France. In December the King bought from Orleans his rights in Savona and Genoa.† This was check-mate both to Orleans and Visconti.

Burgundy and the Queen were triumphant. The Queen wrote to the Florentines that affairs were going well, that her enemy and theirs was fallen in disgrace, and on the 29th December the King joined the Florentines against his late ally. For there was now great irritation in France against Visconti, who, furious at the treachery which had outwitted his plans for Genoa, played a double game with

* Paul Durrieu, "Le Royaume d'Adria." See also an important passage, "Religieux de St. Denis," t. ii. p. 402.

† "Arch. Nat.," K. 54, No. 37. December 12, 1396: "Comme depuis que nostre très-cher et très amé frère le Duc d'Orleans eut, pour les causes et les concideracions qui le meurent, entrepriz d'avoir la Seigneurie des cité, pays et territoire de Gennes. Et tant fait pour venir à son entencion. . . . Savoir faisons que pour contenter et deffraier nostre dit frère des trés-grans fraiz missions et despenses par luy en plusieurs manières faiz et soustenuz . . . nous avons avec nostre dit frère traicté et accordé sur de et pour ces choses et leurs dependances la somme de trois cents mile frans d'or pour une foiz."

France. Signing with one hand a fraternal alliance with King Charles,* with the other he stirred up the Genoese to rebel against his yoke. But the Genoese suspected his counsels, and revealed the whole intrigue to the Court of Paris. Hence fury among the nobles, an ardent desire to punish the false friend.† Hence among the populace the best will in the world to believe the Duke of Milan a wizard and his daughter a witch, an infernal spirit bringing death and madness upon the beloved King.

IX.

Thus the machinations of Milan served to exasperate the French. And the indignity and insult offered to Valentine were as great a cause of irritation to Visconti. He and his daughter, with their Lombard indifference to superstitition, could have nothing but contempt for the panic of the French. "Et l'une des plus dolentes et courroucées qui y fust, c'estoit la Duchesse d'Orleans," writes Juvenal des Ursins. Twice or thrice the Duke of Milan sent his ambassadors to the King of France, offering to find a knight to fight at outrance with any man who would accuse Madame Valentine of any treason. So sore and angry were the father and the brother-in-law of Valentine that there was a talk of a Milanese invasion. Great counter preparations were made in France, and the League was signed with the Floren-

* August 31, 1395. Lünig Codex Italiæ Diplomaticus, i. col. 421.

† "Religieux de St. Denis," ii. p. 436, *et. seq.*

tines against Milan. The King, being in good health then, went to Boulogne to celebrate the marriage of his daughter Isabel, a child of seven, with Richard II. of England, a man some years older than himself. Richard was very bitter against Milan. He offered to send an English contingent to the King's aid, if he invaded Lombardy. He warned the King again and again against the spells and sorceries of Lombardy; and he produced so strong an impression upon the enfeebled mind of Charles, that on the 29th of October, as the two kings were sitting together at dinner, the King of France perceiving among the heralds one with the Serpent of Milan on his shield, had him stripped of his arms, menaced with death, and chased out of the royal presence. The Duke of Milan retaliated with the famous Investiture of 1396, which excludes the children of Valentine of Orleans from the succession to Milan. With things at this pitch of hostility, war seemed imminent, and the route was made out for the invasion of Lombardy. But that war never took place. "And that journey," say Froissart, "took none effect; for the discomfiture of the battle before Nicopoly in Turkey, and the death and the taking of the Lords of France. And also they saw well that the Duke of Milan was in favour with the Great Turk, Lamorabaquy; wherefore they durst not displease him, so let him alone." It became immediately necessary to make peace with Milan,* the one power in Europe that could mediate with Turkey. The ambassadors of the King, Burgundy, Orleans, and the

* "Delaville Le Roulx. La France en Orient," vol. i. p. 290–304.

Sultan, caused a continual come-and-go in Milan. Visconti took his position of peace-maker in good part. In March, 1397, he procured a third and less hostile investiture. The talk of magic was hushed for a while, and Valentine returned in peace to Court.

Yet now, perhaps, for the first time the French people, not unjustifiably, might have heaped their odium on Valentine. For her latest historian supports a theory suggested long ago by Froissart.* While the French were projecting their invasion of Lombardy—while the son of that Burgundy who had advised the King in the affair of Genoa was leading against the Turks a French Crusade which might easily return homewards *viâ* Lombardy and Milan —Giangaleazzo, furious and humiliated, sought any means of salvation and revenge. He, like many another Italian, was in correspondence with the Turk; and an idea, successfully practised by many another Italian,† may not unnaturally have suggested itself to him. If France joined the Florentine League then adieu for ever to the hopes of Visconti. And Burgundy, as he knew, was in favour of Florence. And the son of Burgundy was captain of the French army. Small hope here; yet, if the French army could be destroyed in Turkey, Milan would be safe! Then the astute Visconti would smile to think of his daughter in France. Valentine who wrote him everything—

* *Vide* "Jean sans Peur, Duc de Bourgogne, Lieutenant et Procureur-général du Diable cès parties d'Occident," par M. Paul Durrieu, Paris, 1887.

† For example Carlo Zeno in 1403, Gattilusio in 1399, each of whom informed the Turks concerning the plan of campaign of a Christian enemy.

also told him doubtless (as the author of Maistre Jehan de Meun tells us*) of the vain young aristocrats, ruined by free living and fine carousing, who were starting on that terrible journey, thinking of nothing more serious than the elegant spectacle of their departure :

> "Mais que le partir soit joly
> Vous ne regardez point la fin !"

Gay young gallants, unfit for privation, who, when they reach Palestine, will be too weak to strike three strokes with the magnificent swords so much too heavy for their hands.

> "Les Sarrazins s'arment légier ;
> Sy c'est bon courage et fier."

But the panoply of these splendid youths—these *gens de paraige*—was for decoration rather than for battle. Valentine, the confidant of her father—who in the long afternoons of exile would turn with the expansion of relief to her one kinsman, her staunch protector—would tell him of the weakness that underlay the glory of this martial going-off. She would write to him the plan of campaign, the route decided on, the means of attack and defence. She would inform him not only of the quality but of the number of the army. And Giangaleazzo was aware that these details transmitted to the Turks would ensure the disaster of the French,

* "L'Apparicion de Maistre Jehan de Meun." Bib. Nat. Fr. 811, No. 7203. This is an illuminated manuscript in defence of Valentine of Orleans, and dedicated to her.

and draw away the gathering storm that threatened to break on Milan.

The Duke of Milan was not scrupulous; he was "moult bien" in the friendship of the Turk. The Turk gained a singular acquaintance with the disposition of the French army. No need to dwell here on the terrible disaster of that unforgotten battle: the twelve to twenty thousand dead; the rare fugitives stealing homewards, dukes and barons, in the dress of beggarmen; the harder lot of those taken by the Turks, sold into slavery, or massacred in vengeance for the Faithful slain at Christian hands; of the heartsick waiting of the few—a very few, of the richest and noblest—set aside for ransom. One of these, Jacques de Heilly, was sent by the Sultan on parole to France, to inform the King of the disaster and to bring back the news of their intentions with respect to ransom. He was bidden to pass by Milan * in order to convey to Giangaleazzo Visconti the salutations of the Sultan. On Christmas night he arrived in Paris; the Court were feasting and dancing. In the prison of the Châtelet, hungry and cold, there were men who spent their Christmas in a dungeon for having spread false news, as it was said, of a great defeat in Turkey. But the tale of D'Heilly told, all that was changed: the prisoners were freed, the Court was in tears. The bells rang in all the churches for the dead. The universal thought was how to redeem the flower of France from a savage captivity. On the 20th of January, 1397, a French embassy was sent to Milan. A few days earlier Jacques de Heilly,

* "Delaville Le Roulx. La France en Orient," Paris, 1886, vol. i. p. 291.

laden with propitiatory gifts, had returned to the Sultan. Nothing was spoken of but mediation and reconciliation. And Valentine—so long the innocent scapegoat of her party—was recalled to favour in the very hour when all men might have suspected her as the involuntary origin of misery.

X.

Actual war with Milan was averted; but the rumours against the King's brother continued still in France.

On the 24th of March, 1403, Ives Gilemme, a priest; Demoiselle Marie de Blansy, Perrin Hémery, a locksmith, and Guillaume Floret, a clerk, were publicly burned for sorcery. And still the King was mad. Were those who bewitched *him*, the head of the State, to keep their immunity? There *was* such a crime as witchcraft, and people legally suffered for it. The King was bewitched: who was the wizard?

To this incessant question Burgundy ever helped to point the answer. Who was the person who profited most by the sickness of the King?

The Duke of Orleans had become very powerful. In January, 1393, an ordonnance had promised him the Regency in case of the death of the King.* His

* "Ordonnances des rois de France," t. vii. p. 535. The Duke of Orleans was never Regent, despite the line of the Monk of St. Denis which assures us that in 1402 the King made his brother Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom. During the frequent relapses of Charles VI. the kingdom was governed by a Council. There was no Regency before the year 1415.

prestige, his wealth, his faction increased with every year. This young man who, in 1385, possessed no more than 12,000 livres a year, was Duke of Orleans (1391), Count of Valois and Count of Beaumont (1386), Count of Asti and Count of Vertus (1387), Count of Soissons (1391), Count of Blois (1391), Count of Dreux, Count of Angoulême (1394). In 1394 he was very nearly King of Adria. He was Count of Perigord in 1398. He was Seigneur of Savona (1394), Seigneur of Coucy (1391) ; he possessed both lands and castles in Hainault, at Pierrefonds, and at Ferté-Millon (1392). The Duchy of Luxembourg (1402), the Duchy of Aquitaine (1407) lay immediately before him.

The princes of Europe appealed to the Duke of Orleans as to an independent sovereign. The Duke of Guelders concluded a separate alliance with him (1401). The King of the Romans offered him for his son the heiress of Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland (1397). Henry of Lancaster, an exile in Paris (1399), paid more court to him than to the King of France. And in 1405 the Venetians sent two secret ambassadors to Orleans, who in return despatched a certain Pierre de Scrovignes with private despatches to the Signory of Venice. Since 1401 the Venetians had never sent a message to the King. Burgundy began to fear that Orleans would induce the new Antipope at Avignon to depose Charles VI. in his own favour.

There is, I think, no evidence of such an intention, and yet the suspicions of Burgundy may not impossibly have been correct. In 1400 the Germans deposed their drunken Wenzel, in 1398 the English

had deposed their incapable Richard. Why should not France depose a king continually lapsing into madness? In the year 1399 the king had six relapses. Orleans may have been no less ambitious than his sworn friend and brother, Henry of Lancaster, who had so lately conquered for himself the throne of England.

Orleans and Burgundy turn by turn usurped the direction of affairs. Vainly King and Queen and Court attempted to assuage their rivalry. On the 14th of June, 1401, the Queen of France (the King being mad), the King of Sicily, the Dukes of Berri and Bourbon, made a League "pour apaiser les Ducs d'Orlèans et de Bourgogne."* In vain. The King himself was powerless, and could only bid his subjects—as in 1405 he bade the Bailly de Caux—to stand aside and take no part nor lot in the discord existing between the Dukes of Orleans and Burgundy.† This impartiality was only apparent. The growing influence of Burgundy was dreaded by Berri and the Queen, no less than by Orleans himself. And in the winter of 1405, these three persons joined themselves together in an "Alliance défensive et réciproque, pour se maintenir au pouvoir."‡ Thus, if Burgundy had the nation on his side, the authority of the Queen, the influence of Valentine (all-powerful with the King), was with Orleans. In 1404 Philip of Burgundy died, and his faction gained new vigour with the

* Arch. Nat. K. 55, No. 16, June 14, 1401.
† Arch. Nat. K. 55, No. 39, Aug. 21, 1405.
‡ Arch. Nat. K. 55, No. 36, Dec. 1, 1405.

accession of his son, a man less temperate, less aristocratic than his father. The blood of his Flemish mother worked in the veins of the young man, restless, violent, demagogic as a burgher of Ghent. The young Duke of Burgundy had no woman to work for him; it was even rumoured that the portrait of his own wife hung in that locked chamber where Orleans kept the pictures of his mistresses. But Jean-sans-Peur did not need any feminine advocate. He was young, he was rich. In 1404 his father's death bequeathed him Burgundy, next year his mother died and left him Flanders. A small ugly man, alert, blunt, brutal even, serving public interests to reach his own ends, Jean-sans-Peur of Burgundy was the hero of the people. "Brun et barbu et bien aimé," writes Burcarius.

Meanwhile the people groaned under the tyranny of Orleans. *Jugum intollerabile plebis.* And Orleans, sceptical and embittered, had no respect and no pity for the ignorant populace that reviled him, that menaced his virtuous wife, that mocked the death of his little child with cruel and insulting calumnies. The people to him were odious, or, at best, indifferent; a cup to drain, a fruit to squeeze and throw away the rind. In 1403 he laid upon them an impost of three hundred thousand crowns. Out of this he builded for himself two famous castles, Pierrefonds and Ferté-Millon, beautiful as the towers of heaven in a picture by Van Eyck.

In 1407, not content, he levied a new tax. The money thus gained enriched the State far less than him, and great personages accused him and the

Queen of leaving no single florin to rattle in the empty treasury. When Orleans suggested the new impost, Jean-sans-Peur opposed him in the royal council: "I ask pity of the poor people. It is tyranny to aggravate their intolerable yoke." Jean-sans-Peur declared that, in *his* domains at least, the impost should not be collected; rather would he forfeit the entire amount himself. Struck by this generosity, the young Duke of Brittany volunteered to postpone his wife's dowry until the treasury was full again.

The tax was levied all the same. It was a war levy, and really necessary. Every man and woman in France was mulcted according to the value of his goods. In this way a vast sum was raised—twenty-seven millions. It was lodged in a tower of the Louvre. One night, when the town was quiet, Orleans, with a band of armed men, entered this tower and carried off at least two-thirds of the treasure.

When the people heard of it—the people who (the Monk assures us) had sold the straw of their beds to pay the levy—they prayed publicly in every town and hamlet: "Jesus Christ in heaven, send thou some one to deliver us from Orleans!"

Orleans smiled no less bitterly than when he had heard the public whisper accuse him of sorcery and devil-worship. He proclaimed that whosoever did not pay the taxes should be cast into prison; to prevent assassination, no man was to carry another knife than he used for his eating; a fourth of the provisions of the royal household was to be supplied daily,

without payment, by the people of Paris. These provisions, as the people knew very well, did not go to feed or clothe their beloved King. He, in his palace, was as poor, as suffering as themselves. The Dauphin was no richer: "in penury and want," says the Monk, "if such words may be used for so great a personage." The insatiable Orleans, the avid little Queen, grasped and kept everything. "Jesus Christ in heaven," prayed the people, "send some one to deliver us from the Duke of Orleans."

Orleans should have listened. The air was full of warnings to tyrants. Richard and Wenzel had fallen miserably. The Duke of Milan had died of the plague; in six months his vast kingdom had fallen into ruins. Tyranny is, so often, a personal accident —a possession, not an inheritance. Was it worth while? The King himself added to the list of these monitions. In August, 1404, he married his eldest son to Burgundy's daughter, his daughter to the son of Burgundy.

In the year 1405, on Ascension Day, the people found a voice. An Augustine monk, Jacques Legrand, preached then before the Court. The Queen, Valentine, and Orleans were present, but not the King. "O Queen! O Duke!" said the monk, "you are the curse and derision of your people. Do you not believe me? Go into the streets and hear them!

"*Tua curia, Domina Venus solium occupans,* thy court, O Queen! where Lady Venus fills the throne, thy Court, by day and night, is the scene of debauch and drunkenness. Dissolute dances do honour to the goddess. Frequent bathing enervates your bodies.

Fringes to your sleeves, and long sleeves to your garments; yet are ye clothed upon with the sighs and tears of the poorest of your people. Your hearts are corrupt and your minds are all unmoved: *Domina Venus solium occupat.*"

There was a flutter of indignation in the Court. The monk's sermon was reported to the King, but to the surprise of all, Charles answered that he was glad of it. On Whit-Sunday Legrand was commanded to preach again, and in the royal presence. The monk repeated his sermon, but with larger reference to a certain noble duke, "once good and dear, but hated now for his oppression and his vice." The King left his chair and sat down face to face with the monk, listening earnestly, who can tell with what cruel suspicions, what resolutions for inquiry and reform, in his dim and altered mind. When the sermon was over, the King spoke to Legrand for some moments. He thanked him earnestly.

Charles was deeply impressed with the words of the Augustine friar. Struggling against continual relapses, he made a brave effort to do the best he could for his disordered kingdom. When Orleans asked for the government of Normandy, for the first time he was refused. Another day the poor King called the Dauphin to him. "How long, my lad, is it since your mother kissed you?"

"Three months," the boy replied.

The King was much affected. His children were evidently pinched, neglected, uncared for. He called the boy's nurse to him, and gave her a gold cup. "Look after my son when I am ill. If God grant me life I will reward you later."

This was in July, 1405. Burgundy was absent on his own estates. The King wrote to him and implored him to return to Paris.

Orleans and the Queen were at St. Germains. They paid no heed to any warning. On the 13th of July there was a fearful storm; torrents of rain, eddies of wind. The Queen and Orleans were riding in the forest when they were overtaken by the tempest. The Duke took refuge in the Queen's litter, but the frightened horses nearly drowned them in the Seine. The people declared that it was the judgment of heaven upon tyrants, and Orleans himself appeared impressed. He sent a herald to Paris, and proclaimed that whosoever of his creditors should come on Sunday next to the Hôtel de Behaigne should have his debt discharged in full. On Sunday the halls and anterooms of the ducal palace were crowded with eager burghers. Many, tired and anxious, had travelled from the provinces. The Duke's stewards laughed in their face and shut the doors. This was the final touch to the exasperation of the people.

All this while Jean-sans-Peur was travelling to Paris. He came at the head of six thousand men-at-arms. The King was mad again, and could not support him; but none the less the Queen and Orleans feared an insurrection in Burgundy's favour. They decided to flee secretly away into Luxembourg with the royal children. Valentine was with them; and they had got as far as Pouilly when the troops of Burgundy suddenly surrounded the litter of the Dauphin, some hours' journey to the rear. The boy was delighted; he embraced his father-in-law, and was carried in

triumph back to Paris. Isabel, with Valentine and Orleans, fled to the Castle of Melun. Civil war seemed eminent; but when the two armies were actually in the field, peace was arranged, and on the 15th of October the Queen and Orleans re-entered Paris.

Orleans had learned nothing by his lesson. He was more than ever arrogant, more than ever secure in his tyranny. Early in the next year his young son Charles was married to the King's daughter Isabel, the widowed Queen of England, a girl of sixteen. In the first months of 1407 the King gave his brother the rich duchy of Aquitaine. Orleans began to think again of the governorship of Normandy. He was richer and stronger than the King.

And yet, if Valentine, if Orleans, had really read the future as the people thought they did, or had they even cared to read the present, they might well have paused. In that age the fate of tyrants was not prosperous. The King of England was a leper. The King of France was mad. The little Duke of Milan was mad also, with a furious Italian hemomania. The King of Scotland was a prisoner in the hands of his enemies. There were two Popes, things for scorn and laughter, held in derision of all nations, and a song to the people all day long.

Already, in 1380, Miles de Dormans, Chancellor of France, had declared "A government has no force save in the obedience of the people, for kings only rule by the suffrage of their subjects: *Nam et si centies negent, reges regnant suffragio populorum.*"

The judgment of heaven, the liberties of man, seemed to conspire alike against the rule of tyrants.

XI.

Notwithstanding his deceptions in the affair of Genoa, and in spite of his supremacy in France, Orleans still cherished designs on Lombardy; and perhaps the chief cause why his Italian enterprises are less noticeable in the fifteenth than in the seventeenth century is due, not so much to his engrossment with affairs at home, as to the fact that in Benedict XIII. he found an ally infinitely less subtle and less brilliant than he had known in Clement VII. Benedict was little more than a captive in the hands of Orleans; * Clement had been an accomplice.

A greater than Clement failed him a little later. In the autumn of 1402, in the very flush and zenith of victory, Giangaleazzo Visconti died. A score of his captains soon were fighting for his kingdom. That vast territory, whose coherence existed only in the brain of one man, fell rapidly into fragments: city after city threw off the unwilling yoke of union, and what had almost begun to be a national Italy reverted in a few weeks to the old conditions of fragmentary independence. His two sons ruled in a narrowed Lombardy, and with no vista, as it seemed, on the ambitions of their father. In the very same year that

* "Arch. Nat." Carton K. 55, No. 10: "Lettres par les-quelles le Roi commect la garde du Pape Bénoist 13 au Duc d'Orléans, au-quel il donne cent hommes de sa garde. No 14 bis: Lettres du Roy Charles VI. déclaratrices que loin de tenir le Pape Bénoist XIII. prisonnier, il l'a pris sur sa sauve garde et que pour plus grande sûreté de sa personne et de ses biens il a établi son frère le Duc d'Orléans pour en avoir garde.

the great Visconti died, Charles VI. sent to Genoa a small, restless, quixotic man of much ability, who to some extent filled the empty place of the dead Giangaleazzo. But if Marshal Boucicaut had much of the ambition, and all the audacity of the late Duke of Milan, he possessed nothing of his slow wise mind, of the deep and subtle duplicity that Machiavelli may have envied, or of the powers of combination, the cool tenacity to a grand idea, which foreshadowed the genius of another North Italian, Count Cavour. Moreover, while such share as Visconti meant to allow the French in Italy was destined by him for his son-in-law of Orleans, Boucicaut worked for the King. Thus, for the second time in his experience, the Frenchman found his greatest rival in France.

Of the two legitimate sons of the great Duke of Milan—one was a handsome young Nero, blood-mad, inept, given over to passion and cruelty; the other an astute child, timid, unscrupulous, who later should develop a trace of the genius of his father. At first their hold on their inheritance was so slight that Orleans determined on invading Lombardy, whether to defend or to supplant his nephews, who shall say? In October, 1403, he started for Lombardy, accompanied by 13 knights-banneret, 43 knights, 212 squires, 28 archers, 20 crossbow-men, and other soldiers.* On the way south he passed by Beaucaire, and had an interview with his charge, the Antipope Benedict. He took into his service the famous captain of adventure, Bernardon de Serres.

* Communicated by Comte Albert de Circourt from transcripts in his possession.

He made friends with another mighty captain—an ancient enemy—the Count of Armagnac.* Vast and serious appeared his project of invasion, but, on the very verge of the Alps, suddenly, on January, 1404, he abandoned the prosperous enterprise, turned right about, and faced home for Paris.

What is the meaning of this sudden change of course, unexplained, and perhaps inexplicable? What was the object of the Lombard invasion? What was the cause which so unexpectedly suppressed it? Orleans believed himself to have a certain claim on Pisa, bequeathed by the great Visconti to his bastard son Gabriello-Maria. Gabriello Visconti was ill at ease in Pisa. A little later, in 1404, as we know, he offered his unruly city first to France, then to Florence. It is possible—it is even from the nature of things a necessary hypothesis—to suppose that in 1403 Gabriello had come to terms with Orleans, and that the rights on Pisa which Orleans vaunted as his own through Valentine Visconti were supported by some cession of the actual lord, her half-brother. But Orleans was not the only Frenchman capable of adventure and practice in Italy. By the time his army reached the frontier he found himself outwitted by a higher bidder, nearer at hand.

Jehan le Meingre, Marshal Boucicaut, Governor of Genoa, had intrigued with Gabriello and procured the city of Pisa for the King. A few months later, on the 15th of April, 1404,† a deed was drawn up declaring Pisa henceforth a fief of France.

* See M. Paul Durrieu, "Les Gascons en Italie," p 214.

† Dumont, Corps Diplomatique. II. ccxvii. and ccxxxi.

At the first word of the matter Orleans had turned his back on his contemplated campaign and marched back to Paris, fury in his heart. Probably behind the interference of Boucicaut he divined the inspiration of Burgundy, his enemy;—Burgundy who, as events should prove, had unsuspected designs of his own upon the State of Pisa. Back in wrath marched Orleans: stalked indignant into Paris his men at his heels: found the King in his senses, and docile as was his wont. From him, on the 24th of May, Orleans extracted the deed which we append,* a deed that re-

* Avd Nat. K. 55, No. 11, bis July 26, 1404. À tous ceulx qui ces présentes lettres verront, Guilles, Seigneur de Tignonville, chevalier, conseiller, chamberlain du Roy nostre seigneur et garde de la prévosté de Paris, Salut! Savoir faisons que nous l'an de grace 1404, ce Mercredi 26 jour du mois de Juillet, vismes une lettre du Roy nostre seigneur scellée de son grant scel sur double couronne, des quelles la teneur s'ensuit:

Charles par la grace de Dieu Roy de France, à tous ceulx qui ces lettres verront, Salut! Savoir faisons que après la supplication et requeste à nous faictes par nostre très-cher et très-amé frère Loys Duc d'Orléans, contenant que comme à cause de nostre très chère et très amée soeur, sa femme, fille du feu nostre oncle le Duc de Milan, plusieurs villes terres et seigneuries situées es parties d'Italie et de Lombardie, entre lesquelles est et doit estre la ville et cité de Pise avec toutes ses appartenances, la seigneurie de laquelle nostre dit frère dit estre et appartenir au dit feu Duc de Milan auparavant qu'il alla de vie à trespassement appartiennent et doivent appartenir à iceluy nostre très-cher frère. Il nous a exposé et il ait entendu de nouvel que la dicte ville et cité de Pise et aucuns chasteaulx appartenant d'icelle, par certains moyens sont à nous acquis et venues en nostre main. Et ont été bailliz pour nous par nostre très-féal Chevalier Chambellan et conseiller Jehan le Meingre dit Boucicaut, Maréschal de France, et Gouverneur pour nous de nostre cité et seigneurie de Jennes, pour quoy il nous a requis en tout le droit que nous avons et pouvons avoir de la dicte ville

pudiates the action of Boucicaut, and transfers all the rights of France in Pisa to Orleans, who henceforth shall meet with neither let nor hindrance in his projects.

The deed was granted in Council, the King being

et cité de Pise et ès aultres cités et appartenances qui furent au dit Seigneur de Milan, nous veuillons bailler et délaisser. Et tout empeschement mis de par nous en la dicte ville et cité de Pise et ès dictes chateaulx et aultres appartenances d'icelles, veuillons faire oster et cesser, sans y plus procéder, ny faire procéder, en sa préjudice. Nous voulons toujours condescendre au justes requestes de nostre-dit frère, comme raison est. Qui avons baillie et délaissié de une certaine science par ces présentes tout le droit et seigneurie par nous acquis de nouvel et que nous avons et pouvons avoir en dicte ville et cité de Pise et ès aultres chasteaulx et appartenances d'iceulx. Et voulons et ordonnons par ces présentes que l'empeschement mis par et en nostre nom en la dicte ville, cité et Seigneurie de Pise et ès chateaulx et aultres appartenances d'icelles, soit osté. Si donnons en mandement par ces présentes et envoyons très-expressement au dit gouverneur de nostre dicte cité de Jennes et à tous nos aultres justiciers et conseillers ou à leurs lieutenants et à chaseur d'eulx, si que di luy appendra, que de nostre bailli et délaissements dessus ditz faient, sueffrent et laissent jouer et user paisiblement nostre dict frère. En mectant au délivrement de luy ou à ses ditz gens officiers commis et députés de par lui tous les ditz droit et seigneurie par nous acquis de nouvel ès ditz ville cité et chasteaul dessus ditz. Et en ostant tout l'empeschement qui en iceulx a esté mis de nostre part. En tesmoing de ce nous avons fait mettre à ces lettres nostre scel. Donnè a Paris le 24 jour de May l'an de grace mil quatre ans et quatre et le 24 de nostre règne. Aussi signées par le Roy en son rayson. Messigneurs les Ducs de Berry et de Bourbon, le Connestable, le Comte de Tancarville, le grand maistre d'ostel et aultres.

Et nous a ce présent transcript in tesmoing de ce que usismes le scel de la dicte prévosté de Paris l'an et jour dessus promis et dietz. Manessier.

then in his senses, and assisted by Berri, Bourbon, Tancarville, and others. The reader will remark the noteworthy absence of Burgundy. He will remember also that Berry, in 1405, will join Orleans in a defensive league against Jean-sans-Peur. It is possible that Burgundy knew nothing of the deed drawn up behind his back.

But it was too late for Orleans to profit by the King's good-will. The Florentines were in Pisa, and an invasion against so powerful an enemy could not be undertaken.

For a moment Orleans was obliged to pause in his Italian policy—to pause only, not to abandon it, since in 1406 * he still reclaimed authority on Pisa, and in the very year of his death was taking an active part in the affairs of Lombardy.† That pause was filled

* A strange document in the Carton K. 55 Arch. Nat., under date July 27, 1406, in the form of a letter from the King in Council (Tancarville "et autres" being present), notifies that that day the King has received conjointly the Dukes of Burgundy and Orleans, who have made him their united homage for Pisa. In 1407 the Signory of Florence, having taken Pisa (a French fief), sent to the King, Orleans, and Burgundy to justify their conduct. Orleans seized the Florentine ambassadors and cast them into prison — a high-handed proceeding which he probably considered warranted by his position as suzerain of the captive city. In so doing Orleans probably meant to underline the fact that *he*, not the King or Burgundy, was lord of Pisa, though all had claims to suzerainty. There is a long correspondence on this subject (Archives of Florence, filza xviii. della Signoria. Cancelleria 27).

† It is in 1407 that the Italian projects of Orleans appear in vigorous renascence. On the 6th of October he proclaimed himself Protector of his nephews, Giovanni Maria, Duke of Milan, and Filippo Maria, Count of Pavia, "frères de Dame Valentine

in a manner disastrous, fatal, yet natural enough in a man suffocating under a sense of bitter indignation and revolt. Burgundy had interfered with Orleans abroad. Very well; Orleans would interfere with Burgundy at home. Already the first steps were taken. In 1401, Orleans had married his cousin Mary Harcourt to the Duke of Gueldres, the enemy and the neighbour of Burgundy, with whom his rival now concluded an alliance and a league. In 1402, Orleans purchased from the King of the Romans the Duchy of Luxembourg. In 1405,* he assembled at Melun the entire strength of his faction, sending even to Asti for the Governor and his men. In 1405 also he allied himself with Berri and the Queen against Jean-sans-Peur. With the Court on one hand, and on the other Gueldres, the most reckless captain of his age;—with an army at his heels, and (through the county of Soissons, and down the banks of the Oise and the Marne), an uninterrupted passage through his own possessions into his new Duchy of Luxembourg: Orleans was a deadly enemy to Burgundy. A glance at the map will show the reader how, like a wedge or like a rivet, Luxembourg must split apart

épouse du Duc" (Arch. Nat. K. 56, No. 16). He made the Governor of Asti their guardian, and appeared to meditate an armed intervention. Was this conduct purely and merely disinterested? Did Orleans in October at Beauté-sur-Marne contemplate a great French protectorate in Lombardy of which he should be the soul and centre? A month later a tragic silence suddenly interrupted any answer to these questions.

* See "Arch. Nat." K K. 267 fo. 97. Also the chapter on Bernardon de Serres in M. Paul Durrieu's valuable work, "Les Gascons en Italie."

or hold together the domains of the Netherlands and the provinces of Franche Comté and Burgundy. In the hands of Orleans, Luxembourg was a wedge; and the domains of Burgundy were no longer a compact and formidable territory, but two principalities with Brussels for the capital of the one, and Dijon for the capital of the other. Should Orleans march an army into Luxembourg, should Gueldres come to his aid with an armed force, the suppression of the Dukedom of Burgundy would fall within the range of practical politics.

Henceforth, between these two princes the struggle for power should take on a new character and become the very struggle for existence. And while the people, abject, all in tears, prayed to Heaven: "Jesu Christ, send thou some man to deliver us from Orleans," the hero of the people, Jean-sans-Peur the Belovèd, was urged by every motive of self-interest, every instinct of self-preservation, and with the assurance of popular immunity, to interrupt for ever the fatal progress of the tyrant.

XII.

One Wednesday evening—it was St. Clement's day, the 23rd of November, 1407—Orleans was supping with the Queen. Isabel was ill and dispirited. Ten days ago her new-born baby had died at its birth, and she sorrowed for this child and loved it as she had never loved her other children. Isabel was away from her husband in her new Hôtel de Montaigu, near the Porte Barbette. It was here that Orleans came every day to see her, and here they "supped right joyously

together," says the Monk of St. Denis. Orleans had been ill all autumn at his Castle of Beauté, and had only recently come back to Paris. Valentine, with her four children and the Princess Isabel, was still in the country.

As these two persons, both ill, both weary, forgot their troubles for a while in each other's company, a page came to the door with a feigned message: the King earnestly beseeched his brother to come and see him at the palace of St. Paul. Orleans arose at once and left the Queen. He had at least six hundred men of his own lodged that day in Paris, as Monstrelet informs us. Orleans, however, took none of them with him. He leapt on his mule and rode away with two squires on horseback at his side. Two or three footmen with torches ran after him. No gentleman could go more simply than the King's brother in his plain suit of black damask, riding with no more than five attendants, quickly and gaily down the frosty street. It was the coldest winter ever known, and muffled in their cloaks the little party rode briskly ahead, looking neither to the right or left. Orleans was singing softly to himself and playing with one of his gloves. He feared no enemies. Last Sunday he had taken the Sacrament with Burgundy, and yesterday they two had dined together.

It was eight o'clock. All was dark and silent in the Rue Vieille du Temple, then an outlying and quiet district. Orleans and his two squires rode along so fast that the runners with the torches were left some way behind. At last they came to a wider place in the street where there was a well. As the three

horsemen passed the Hôtel de l'Image de Notre-Dame, seventeen or eighteen men sprang suddenly out of the shadow of the house. One with an axe chopped off the bridle hand of Orleans. The King's brother gave a cry of surprise and pain. "I am the Duke of Orleans!" "It is he we seek."

In another moment the Duke was beaten off his mule on to the frozen paving-stones. Seventeen axes were aimed at him; blow after blow fell heavily; his head was cloven, his brains gushed out into the street. His servants had all fled and left him there, save one of his squires who had been his page (a German, says Monstrelet; a Fleming, says the Monk), who, more constant than Orleans' compatriots, flung himself upon the body of his master, and was pierced and slaughtered there. When both were murdered the assassins dragged the body of Orleans across the street, propped it up against a heap of mud that was standing frozen there, and lighting a torch of straw, they looked to see if he were really dead. A woman, a cobbler's wife, looking from a garret window, saw it all, and set up a shriek of "Murder, murder!" "Peace, harlot," cried the armed men in the street, and began to shoot their arrows at the open casement. At that moment a man with a scarlet hood drawn well over his face, came out of the house opposite, and struck the dead body with his club. "Put out the light. He's dead. Let us go." The eighteen assassins rode away in great merriment, sowing caltrops after them; but before they left they set fire to the house where, for the last fortnight, Jean-sans-Peur had kept them hidden. The flames of the

burning Hôtel de l'Image streamed up through the darkness of the night, awakening the city, and shedding a strange light on the murdered body of Orleans, still propped up in a sitting posture, his wounded head hanging on one side. Just then a nephew of Maréchal de Rieulx, whose great Hôtel stood opposite, a young man, one of Orleans' squires, rode up as he left his uncle's house, and saw his master sitting thus dead, the left hand off, the right arm hanging by a thread. A little distance off, on the stones of the street, lay the page, dying in his faithful youth, murmuring still in his German language, "Ach, my master!" At his side, on the ground, was a white hand severed from the wrist. Close by there lay a fallen glove. The young squire gave the alarm and the dead bodies were carried into the Hôtel de Rieulx.

There was wailing and mourning in the house of Orleans, grief and horror in the house of the King. The deed was soon known, though as yet it was only surmised that one Raoul d'Actonville, a dismissed steward, had wreaked in this ghastly fashion his spite against his master. The next day the royal princes, all in black, with a great multitude of the people of Paris, brought the murdered Duke to the church of St. Guillaume, close at hand. He who had ever loved the good through all his wickedness, lay now among the watching friars, who sang psalms and repeated vigils day and night for his soul; there he lay until they took him to be buried in his own chapel of the Celestines, which is called the Blancs-Manteaux to-day. The people followed him with

torches, remembering only his gay and gracious qualities, his capricious generosity, his gentle raillery, his rhetoric and eloquence, how he had loved learning, and that he had often lived as a monk for days among the Celestines. All Paris wept, those also who had prayed Jesus Christ in heaven to deliver them from Orleans; even Burgundy went in the funeral procession, all in black, weeping also. But when the funeral was over Jean-sans-Peur took Berri and the King of Sicily aside: "I had it done. I slew him. It was an inspiration of the demon's."

XIII.

There were two women, who were not at the burial, to whom the death of Orleans came nearer than to any mourner there. When Isabel heard that Orleans was slain she went in terror of her life. Ill as she was, she had herself carried in a litter to St. Paul's, taking shelter there in the arms of her mad husband, and so soon as she was fit for travel the poor, light, beautiful, little Queen went out of Paris, far away from Burgundy, far, too, from that maimed and slaughtered body lying in the chapel of the Celestines. Terrified, indifferent, she could think of nothing but her own imaginary danger.

The mistress and the wife took the matter in a very different spirit. At first, in her transports of sorrow, Valentine could not act. She tore out her hair and shred her garments; she sobbed so much, that for weeks afterwards her voice was hoarse. But when the first paroxysm was over her strong Italian

character centred itself upon one fixed idea—justice, vengeance for her murdered husband. Valentine had no thought of her own safety. She sent her two elder sons and her girl into Blois, and then, with the Princess Isabel and little John, her youngest child, on either hand, the Duchess of Orleans set out from Château-Thierry for Paris.

Travelling was slow that terrible winter. It was not till the 10th of December that Valentine entered the capital. She, her children, her servants, were all dressed very plainly and roughly, and, of course, in black. The King of Sicily and the Duke of Berri came out to meet them. When they reached the palace Valentine threw herself upon her knees before the King, demanding justice. The poor Charles (*azzez subtil pour lors*) raised her up and kissed her, while they both wept together. He promised strict justice upon Burgundy. Again, ten days later, he declared, "What is done to my only brother is done to me." Valentine and her children, satisfied of vengeance, retired to their great hotel in the Marais.

The King fell ill again so soon as Valentine had left him. "They say, . . . but I affirm nothing," suggests the Monk. Valentine the witch stayed on, however, among the people who had murdered her husband. One thing that we learn of Valentine at this moment shows us how profound, how selfless was her love of Orleans. She sought out his bastard—the little John, afterwards Count of Dunois, the son of Mariette de Canny—and brought him up with her own children. It even seemed as though she loved him more than the others. Glancing from the poetic

Charles, the delicate Philip, the child John, to his determined and eager little face, she exclaimed, "None of your brothers is more fit than you to avenge your father. Nature has cheated me of you!"

To avenge your father! This had become the unique preoccupation of Valentine. But that promised vengeance tarried long. On the 8th of March a learned doctor of theology, the chosen advocate of Burgundy, a certain Maître Jean Petit, excused the murder of Orleans before the King. "*Il est licite d'occire un Tyran.*"

It was not only of tyranny that the Burgundians accused their victim. The tremendous accusation of Jean Petit (which every student of the past has read in Monstrelet) enumerates attempted regicide, and secret poisoning, sorcery, necromancy, charms, incantations. "Sorcery, high treason against God, and regicide, high treason against the King. There is also tyranny," says Maître Jean Petit. It was of course for this third cause, treason against the people, that Orleans' murder was condoned in Paris.

For the people never hid their support of Jean-sans-Peur. Those who had wept at the funeral of Orleans were ready now to cry again the cry of Burgundy. The King, whose mind was again overcast, although he was not actually mad, the King himself on the 9th of April, 1408, signed letters patent granting pardon to Jean-sans-Peur. "Our very dear and well-beloved cousin of Burgundy, *who for the public good and out of faith and loyalty to us, has caused to be put out of this world our said brother of Orleans.*" This was the last insult to his memory.

Valentine would not brook it; she rallied to the charge. Though she herself had been seriously implicated in the tissue of villainy which his murderers had woven about the memory of her husband, Valentine had no thoughts to spare for her own safety. All through July and August she kept agitating against Burgundy. Bringing her children with her she sought the King and cried on her knees for justice. Twenty years' exile for Burgundy! Her two advocates, Sérisi and Cousinet pleaded eloquently for her; refuting the vile accusations of poison and sorcery with a candour, a logic, a fine and modern spirit worthy of the intellect of the dead man they defended. It was all no use. "The Parisians," says Monstrelet, "loved so well this Duke of Burgundy; because they believed that if he undertook the government, he would put down throughout the kingdom all salt taxes, imposts, dues, and subsidies which were to the prejudice of the people." Though nearly all the royal Princes were openly on the side of Valentine, the King did not *dare* avenge his brother. The Court was impotent against the people.

In the early autumn Valentine left Paris. Life was over for her. "Rien ne m'est plus. Plus ne m'est rien," ran her melancholy motto. Anger and bereavement and hopeless sorrow had worn her to a shadow. She took the little Dunois with her children to the Castle of Blois. There were four of them, Charles, the Poet, who should be the father of King Louis XII.; and little John, the grandfather of Francis I.; Philip, Count of Vertus; and Margaret, in later years the grandmother of Anne of Brittany. These

children, three of whom should be the grandparents or great-grandparents of Henri II., Valentine ceaselessly instructed. All her contemporaries bear witness to her untiring vigilance over them. "They are marvellously good, and well-instructed for their years," says Monstrelet: "Moult notablement conduits et indoctrinés." But there was one lesson, dearer than the others, that Valentine perpetually taught her sons. "Avenge your father," she continually cried.

These children, so different in character and destiny, were the dearer to their mother that she felt she had not long to love them. Valentine was dying of a broken heart, "of anger and mourning," writes Juvenal; "of anger and impotent vengeance," says Monstrelet. Her eyes were quite dim with useless tears, and still she resented the very grief that drained her life; for she did not want to leave her little children and her unaccomplished task. "It was pitiful," says Juvenal, "before she died to hearken to her regrets and her complaints, so piteously she regretted her children, and a bastard, called John, whom she could not suffer out of her sight, saying none of her children was fitter to avenge their father." . . . . "Since the tragic end of her husband," says the Monk, "this Duchess spent her days in tears, and many say the bitterness of her heart induced that unhealthy languor of which she died."

This was in November. Upon St. Clement's day, upon that heart-sickening anniversary of her husband's murder, Jean-sans-Peur rode into Paris. It was a triumph. As he passed the people, and their little children cried, "Noel, noel au bon Duc."

It was near a week before the news came down to Blois. When she heard it, Valentine felt that all was over. No vengeance was possible. On the 4th of December the unhappy woman died, with her last breath entreating her little children never to forget their father's murder. But these children were only children, and they were orphans. The death of Valentine seemed to secure the triumph of her enemy. Jean-sans-Peur did not seek to hide his rejoicing: "Car icelle Duchesse continuoit moult asprement et diligemment sa poursuitte." But already Retribution at her grindstone was sharpening the fatal battle-axe of Montereau.

The Claim of the House of Orleans to Milan.

Let us recapitulate.

When, on September 16, 1380, Charles V. of France expired, he left behind him two young sons. One was twelve years old, tall, stalwart, healthy, amiable; the other was a lad of nine, less regularly handsome than his brother, slighter, darker, more agile, more acute, and more engaging.

Charles V. had left his younger son no more than the pension of a private gentleman; the elder was the king of France. The dying monarch, a man of many brothers, had seen the dangers that arise when royal princes are too rich. But he had died before his time; and of his two heirs the king was gentle, dull, and generous; the gentleman, brilliant, grasping, and ambitious. The result was calculable. Twenty years later the younger son was king in all but name; he was rich, puissant, terrible, and hated; while his brother, impoverished and neglected, starved on the throne, the best-beloved man in France. Circumstances had made the rise of the younger son singularly easy. In his twenty-fourth year King Charles VI. became violently mad, and henceforward till his

death there were long regencies (the subject of angry contests between his uncle and his brother) interrupted by periods of lax and kindly government. His younger brother, Louis, Duke of Orleans, became, as first prince of the blood, more powerful than the king. He was too powerful; and his arrogance and his extortions raised many enemies against him. On November 23, 1407, he was cruelly murdered as he was riding by night through the streets of Paris. He had made himself so terrible that even the brother who loved him did not seek to avenge him, but praised the murderer "who, for the public good and out of faith and loyalty to us, has caused to be put out of this world our said brother of Orleans." No one mourned the murdered man absolutely and completely except his devoted widow and his orphaned children.

A year and a week later the duchess died. Her three sons, her one daughter, with Dunois, the natural son of Orleans, whom his widow had adopted, were left fatherless and motherless in a kingdom full of enemies, where their father's murderers triumphed. They entered the world as a battlefield; but, though so young, they entered armed and mounted. From their father they inherited the duchies of Orleans, Luxembourg, and Aquitaine, the counties of Valois, Beaumont, Soissons, Blois, Dreux, Périgord, and Angoulême, with the seigneuries of Coucy and Savona. Through their mother they acquired the county of Vertus in Champagne, the county of Asti in Lombardy, and certain pretensions to the ducal crown of Milan.

I.

In the year 1387 their father, Louis of France, not yet the Duke of Orleans, had been contracted to the Duke of Milan's only daughter, Valentine Visconti, whom two years later he espoused. In relation to the established monarchs of his time, the father of Valentine stood in much the same situation as afterwards the great Napoleon, in the first years of his empire, towards the kings of Germany. He was rich, too powerful to be safely opposed, a conqueror of whom the end was still beyond prediction; hence a man to conciliate and appease. Yet in their hearts they despised him as a parvenu and an adventurer, and deplored and deprecated the moral flaws that marred the beauty of his prosperity.

Giangaleazzo, first Duke of Milan, was the only son of Galeazzo Visconti, who, in conjunction with Bernabò, his brother, swayed the city of Milan and the greater part of Lombardy. They had murdered their own brother, and divided his inheritance between them—Bernabò, the elder, holding his state in Milan, Galeazzo in the city of Pavia.

Bernabò had no less than nine-and-twenty children. Galeazzo had but two, but for these he was ambitious. He married his daughter to the son of the King of England; his son he married to the daughter of the King of France. This was in 1360. The bride and bridegroom were still of childish age. Six years later their eldest child was born. It was a girl, Valentine. The three brothers who followed her died in their minority; but Valentine flourished, grew

to womanhood, and brought into the house of Orleans the tangled question of the Milanese succession.

At her birth and during her childhood her father was but one of several rulers in Milan. The Visconti ruled as a clan rather than as an organized dynasty. They were the descendants of a certain Captain Eriprando, who, in the year 1037, defended Milan against the Emperor Conrad. Notwithstanding this beginning the Visconti were eminently Ghibelline, and depended for all their subsequent fortunes on the emperor. In 1277 they chased the Guelfs from Milan, and made themselves masters of the state. They became lords or *domini* in Milan, lords of an imperial fief, but with no pretence to an imperial investiture. The emperor recognized them only as his captains, his viscounts, or his imperial vicars.

In 1372 the Emperor Charles IV., alarmed at the pretensions of the Visconti clan, deprived them of their office. The rich tyrants, not afraid of a distant emperor beyond the Alps, paid little heed to this punishment. The emperor died, and his son succeeded—the dissolute Wenzel, who was to do so much for Milan. Almost his first act was to create the youthful father of Valentine Imperial Vicar of the Milanese.

This taste of power whetted the ambition of the young man, left fatherless now to confront the faction of his uncle Bernadò and his numerous children. Lax and irregular forms of government favour a violent ambition. By one bold stratagem Giangaleazzo took his uncle prisoner, dispossessed his cousins, and established himself as lord of Milan.

Milan was not enough. Fire and sword cleared the way before him, and his territory stretched to the Apennine ridges. Florence, on the other side, trembled for her independence. The Lombard kingdom was alive again, and, though the Pope refused the indomitable conqueror the title of King of Italy, in 1395 the Emperor Wenzel invested him with the duchy of Milan.

Meanwhile, in 1389, Valentine Visconti had gone to her husband in France. When she left Milan she was no longer her father's only child. A few months before, her stepmother, Caterina Visconti, had given birth to a son. A little later a second son was born. The greatest conqueror of his age could now divide his possessions between two sons born in wedlock, a bastard boy named Gabriello, and his only daughter Valentine, the child of his first wife, the Princess Isabelle of France. The first question that confronts us is this: What provision did Giangaleazzo Visconti make for his daughter Valentine of Orleans?

For many centuries there has been much debate concerning the claim of Orleans to Milan. Much argument and little evidence has confused the question; it is only the evidence that we shall examine here. In the National Archives of Paris * there exists the original marriage-contract of Valentine Visconti. A copy of this document is contained in a brown leather folio, stamped with the Visconti serpent, exist-

* J. 409, No. 42. Contrat de Mariage. 42 *bis*, Vidimus du Contrat et Acte de la remise d'Asti. Pavia, April 8, 1387. 42 *ter*, Confirmation du Contrat par Clement VII. à Avignon. For further documents on the subject see Carton K. 553.

ing in the British Museum.* It is an instrument granted by the Antipope, Clement of Avignon, on January 27, 1387, in favour of Louis of Orleans and Bertrand de Guasche, Governor of Vertus, as representing the father of Valentine. To the marriage contract are appended a dispensation (Louis and Valentine were cousins), a deed of transfer for the bride's dowry of Asti and its dependencies, and a declaration of her right to succeed her father in Milan, in case his direct male line should become extinct. The clause which chiefly concerns us runs as follows: "*Item est actum et in pactum solempni stipulatione vallatum et expresse deductum quod in casu quo præfatus dominus Johannes Galeas vicecomes, comes Virtutum, dominus Mediolanensis, decedat sine filiis masculis de suo proprio corpore ex legitimo matrimonio procreatis, dicta domina Valentina, nata sua, succedat et succedere debeat in solidum in toto dominio suo presente et futuro quocumque, absque eo quod per viam testamenti, codicillorum, seu alicujus alterius ultimæ voluntatis, aut donatione inter vivos, ipsa aliquid faciat seu facere possit in contrarium quovis modo.*"

The husband of Valentine was for many years the tool with which the astute Visconti hoped to assure his own supremacy in Italy. In 1393 and in 1394 Visconti had no dearer scheme than that Clement, the Antipope at Avignon, should make the Duke of Orleans king of Adria. With Clement at Rome, Anjou at Naples, Orleans ruling the centre from Spoleto to Ferrara, Visconti beheld the annihilation of Venice and the Tuscan republics—a united Italy north of

* Additional MSS., No. 30,669, fo. 215.

Rome. Doubtless he intended the kingdom of Adria and the kingdom of Lombardy to lose themselves in one monarchy: but whether that result was to be attained by the subsequent spoliation of Orleans or by his adoption as heir to Milan, was a question which probably depended on the living or dying of the sons of Giangaleazzo. Orleans, however, though so young, proved himself no facile instrument. He had no intention that Adria and Lombardy should unite to his own disadvantage; and silently he contemplated another scheme—to secure the docility of Lombardy by bounding it on the south by Adria and on the north by another French principality, to be formed by a fusion of Asti and Genoa. Orleans, therefore, determined to begin by the conquest of Genoa; and for three years he displayed so much ability that Giangaleazzo began to suspect this count of Asti and seigneur of Savona, whom the Genoese implored to become the governor of the Ligurian republic. Then came the scandal of the acquisition of Genoa by Charles VI., to the detriment of his brother. From 1395 to 1397 there is a moment of division between the interests of Orleans and Visconti; but, as we shall see, the last act of Visconti was to enforce the claims of Orleans to Milan, and the Duke of Orleans in his will* expressly bequeaths to his eldest son "*la comté d'Ast et autres terres que j'ay et puis avoir au pays de Lombardy et d'outre les monts.*" As far as Orleans and Visconti could decide, there is no doubt of the claim

* Champollion-Figeac, "Louis et Charles ducs d'Orléans," p. 253. The will is dated Oct. 17, 1403: Pisa was probably counted in the "autres terres que puis avoir."

of Orleans to Milan. But it is more difficult to decide by what right Giangaleazzo Visconti disposed of the emperor's fiefs of Milan; for although, when Visconti signed his daughter's marriage-contract, he was simply the illegal despot of Milan, eight years later the emperor made him duke and received tribute at his hands. The lands which Visconti had gained by succession, by fraud, and by conquest, which he had ruled by force and national custom, were now indubitably his by feudal right. But in order to acquire the security of this legality, the Duke of Milan, in theory at all events, had sacrificed a certain portion of his independence.

The first investiture was granted him on Sept. 5, 1395. From this date he held his duchy of Milan as an imperial fief. But as what manner of fief? And which class of fiefs admits a woman to be her father's heir?

These questions, seemingly simple, are in reality difficult to answer, because feudal law was quite indefinitely modified by provincial custom. It was chiefly custom which decided if an hereditary fief could be inherited by a woman in default of males. Thus in France the provinces of Burgundy and Normandy were strictly masculine fiefs; but Lorraine, Guienne, and Artois descended to daughters in default of sons; and the duchy of Brittany, the kingdoms of Cyprus, Navarre, and Naples (a Papal fief), will occur to every mind; while in Germany itself, in the stronghold of feudalism, the duchy of Mecklenburg descended to daughters on extinction of the masculine branch; many fiefs in Swabia, Zutphen, Pomerania, and Saxony, followed this example.

In the North of Italy the distinction between legitimacy and illegitimacy had become so trivial a thing, that sons, born in or out of wedlock, were generally forthcoming in sufficient numbers to distance any feminine claim; and the Imperial investiture—save in the case when it carried with it the Imperial Vicariat—was rather a rose in the buttonhole of the tyrant than a necessary legalization of a tyranny stronger than the law. Yet the marquisate of Montferrat was brought into the house of the Palæologi through a feminine succession; and in 1387 Valentine Visconti brought the country of Asti (no less than Milan an Imperial fief) unquestioned to her husband, and with only the Pope's investiture. A century later Caterina Sforza ruled in Pesaro. The custom in Italy, then, though dubious, various, and full of irregularities and confusions was, on the whole, the same as the custom in Mecklenburg, Pomerania, Swabia, Hungary, Brittany, Navarre, and other places: on extinction of the male descent a woman might succeed. If her succession were provided for by the terms of the investiture; or, in other cases, unless she were deliberately excluded.*

* In the ordinary imperial fiefs, which, even so late as the end of the fourteenth century, still in many cases preserved their original idea of military service granted in return for territorial possessions, a woman could not succeed without direct and especial mention of this fact in the investiture, or in some subsequent privilege. But in a purchased fief daughters were admitted to the succession in default of males. Milan was an imperial fief, derived directly from the emperor, and held by the peculiar sort of tenure known as *Fahnlehen*, from the homage of a banner or standard paid by its possessor to his feudal lord; it was destined,

In the investiture of 1395 which made Giangaleazzo duke of Milan there is no mention of Valentine, but neither is there any direct mention of the sons of Giangaleazzo. The duchy of Milan is bestowed on him, *sui heredes et successores*. Now this term in Italy, where the Pandects were still the model of civil law, might be held to include *all* the children of the possessor; and, on failure of the male line, the daughter would be entitled to put in her claim. I am not aware how much was implied in Germany at this date by the employment of this term; but probably there also it was at least ambiguous, since, under the Hohenstaufen emperors, Roman law had made a great advance through Germany, and since, later on, it was found necessary to formulate a special clause that the use of the expression *sui heredes* should not be considered sufficient to authorize females to claim succession to a masculine fief.

Any ambiguity was dispelled the following year. There was then a possibility of war between France and Milan, grievously estranged at that date by the presence of the French in Genoa, and by the rumours of witchcraft which defamed the reputation and endangered the safety of Madame Valentine in France. At this juncture Giangaleazzo, probably alarmed at the terms of his daughter's marriage-contract, procured a second imperial investiture,* distinctly limit-

even if not explicitly reserved, for masculine operation only. Giangaleazzo Visconti paid the enormous price of 100,000 florins (about £50,000 sterling) for the title and investiture, but I am not aware whether this is or is not sufficient to grant the fief the looser privileges of a *feudum emptum*.

* "Ann. Med.," in Muratori, "Rer. Ital. Script." xvi.

ing the succession to male heirs. But this was not the end. In 1396 news came to Paris of the battle of Nicopolis, which necessitated an immediate *rapprochement* with Milan; for Giangaleazzo Visconti, feared and hated because of his friendship with the Turk, was at this juncture the one necessary man, capable of mediating between the French and the East. Great court was paid to him, and he accepted the French advances. Peace and amity being restored between the two countries, on March 30, 1397, he obtained a third and last investiture from Wenzel,* which restored the conditions of inheritance to their original footing, and bestowed the duchy of Milan on Giangaleazzo Visconti, *descendentes et successores sui.*

This ambiguity of phrase may possibly have been designed. The fact that the fief was a *Fahnlehn*, directly dependent on the emperor, and that (so far as I can discover) no special Imperial privilege had been granted to Madame Valentine, would in Germany itself appear as strong evidence in favour of a solely masculine succession as even the second investiture could afford. But in Italy, by the custom of the country and the authority of contract and testament, the children of Valentine would be included among the heirs and descendants of her father ; and, in case the whole race of his sons expired, the vague terms of the investiture would allow the line of Orleans to put in a claim which would prevent so important a part of Italy from relapsing to the foreign emperor. Such at least, as it appears to me, must have been the

* Dumont, ii. clxxxix.

design of the duke in obtaining this last investiture, a two-edged weapon in the hands of him who has been described as the wisest and the most astute among all the princes of the west.

His position, therefore, seems to have been as follows. To secure himself against any inconvenient pretensions of the French, he had the restrictions of the feudal law; and yet he was equally protected against the encroachments of the empire. He had the sanction of local custom, the ambiguity of the terms of investiture; and, in addition to this, a papal privilege, conceding to Valentine the right to succeed her brothers or her nephews in the state of Milan.

The right of a Pope to dispose of an Imperial fief appears upon the face of it a very questionable matter, even when the Empire be really vacant. When Valentine Visconti was contracted to her husband, Clement VII. had merely declared an interregnum in the empire, on account of the adherence of Wenzel, King of the Romans, to the faction of Urban the Pope at Rome. Such was the supremacy of the Church over Imperial affairs at this period, that, notwithstanding the absurdity of this plea and the fact that Clement was an Antipope, none was ever found to question the legality of the French claim to Asti, which was not granted to Orleans by any Imperial privilege until the investiture of 1413. An intriguing adventurer anxious to consolidate a new and unpopular dynasty by every legal claim, Giangaleazzo cultivated Emperor, Pope, and Antipope. Urban and Clement and Wenzel were all in turn solicited to confirm the tenure of Visconti. Corio appears to believe

that the succession of Valentine to Milan was granted by Urban, who was certainly in Lombardy in the year 1387. But Urban had denied to Giangaleazzo the coveted title of king of Italy; and there are as yet no documents discovered which prove the alluring hypothesis that the astute Visconti held in his possession a decree of the Pope no less than a decree of the Antipope granting the succession to Milan to his daughter.

Enough, however, remains to show by what a cunning opposition of France to Germany, and Germany to France, the Duke of Milan strove to secure Italian independence. If the Germans, then but the shadow of a power, chose to assert their over-lordship, the claim of the French was strong enough to insure them two enemies instead of one; and *vice versa*: —as, indeed, a later century too adequately proved. Hoping to hold each neighbour in check and fear of the other, Giangaleazzo meant to insure a period of quiet growth for his own principality of Lombardy.

Thus the contract securing Milan to Valentine by a papal transfer made for France; the second investiture was absolute for Germany: the first and third were so worded that they conveyed a different meaning on either side of the Alps. Besides papal privileges and imperial investitures there is, however, a third way of conferring property: I mean the way in which Naples was transferred to Anjou—the way of bequest.

But, the reader will exclaim, can a feoffer dispose of a fief without the written consent of his feodary? Here, as in the question of feminine succession, the

matter was chiefly decided by the custom of the province. In certain countries—as, for example, Nassau, Friedland, Ober Lausitz—a feoffer might dispose of his possessions by will, although a contrary law held good in other countries.

But whatever the local law, the tendency was strong, even in feudal Germany, to diminish the rights of the empire to the advantage of the feudatory powers. As Menzel puts it, "the emperor grasped but a shadowy sceptre . . . the princes increased in wealth and power, while the emperor was gradually impoverished. Imperial investiture had become a mere form, which could not be refused except on certain occasions; and the pfalzgraves, formerly intrusted with the management of Imperial allods, had seized them as hereditary fiefs." What was done with impunity in Germany, was done with audacity beyond the Alps. And the Duke of Milan, who had received his principality as a vassal, intended to dispose of it like an hereditary monarch. If we impeach his right to pursue this course, it is not only the claims of the Visconti, but of almost every noble family in Italy, Germany, or Flanders that must submit to be denied or censured.

Yet claiming and acting upon his own authority to dispose of Milan, Giangaleazzo Visconti involved his testament in the same web of intrigue and counter-intrigue which characterized his earlier policy. No less than three wills, entirely different, are open to us; and as the most important of these is only known in an undated copy, it is difficult to decide which was his final disposition of affairs. The first, familiar

enough to the student of Corio, was drawn up in 1397, and was modified in 1401; it makes no provision at all for Valentine. The second (No. ccxxiii in the first volume of Osio's documents), undated, but probably composed in 1397, confirms her *in all possessions previously bestowed*, but grants her nothing else, unless she should fall into a state of poverty or widowhood, in which case she was to have sufficient and princely nurture in her brother's home at Milan, with a dowry in case she should contract a second marriage. This is all, yet this is enough to confirm the contract of 1387. But it is the latest-found of the testaments of Giangaleazzo Visconti which is most important to the student of the French claim to Milan. This will, discovered in 1872 by Signor Luigi Osio in the Milanese Archives, gives an entirely new force to the pretensions of Orleans. Yet it exists only in copy and in extract—like a passage of Sappho saved by some unconscious grammarian—quoted by a Sforzesco advocate in a letter of warning addressed to Lodovico il Moro on Jan. 10, 1496.

At this date, the usurper Lodovico (possessed by the family conviction that at some time his grandfather, Filippo Maria Visconti, must have made a will bequeathing Milan to Lodovico's mother) had entrusted his friend and kinsman Giason del Maino *elegantissimo et celeberrimo legista*, if we may trust the verdict of Corio) with the task of searching the Milanese Archives to this end. Del Maino discovered nothing concerning Madonna Bianca; but instead he found two highly compromising copies of the will of Giangaleazzo Visconti, which had come to light in the

house of Messer Giovanni Domenico Oliari, notary of Pavia, son of Andriano Oliari (an obstinate and honest servant of the Visconti dukes), of whom my readers will hear more upon a future page.

"As for these copies," wrote Messer Giasone, "though they are only copies, and by no means according to the terms, I entreat you to have them seized at once, as well as three other copies which I have reason to believe are in the possession (1) of the brothers of the Certosa of Pavia, (2) of Manfredo da Ozino, and (3) of the Signore della Mirandola. You will do well to keep them safe, for they would be of the greatest value to the Duke of Orleans, since this testament and fidei-commissio provides that, should the sons of Giangaleazzo die without male heirs, one of the sons of Madonna Valentine shall succeed to Milan. And, though I could find it in my heart to maintain that the Duke of Orleans has no right to obtain anything, as to Milan, from you or your illustrious children, none the less you will do well to keep these copies safe."

Lodovico took the hint. Of the five copies mentioned not one exists to-day. Only the forgotten letter remains to show the intention of Giangaleazzo Visconti. Sudden death and swift oblivion rudely damaged his dexterous intrigues—so much here for France, so much there for Germany—an even balance held neatly in a steady hand. The plague numbed that cunning hand for ever in the autumn of 1402. Murder soon removed the elder son of the great duke; and the bastard Gabriello died on the executioner's scaffold in hostile Genoa. Both died childless, and

Milan fell to their younger brother, Filippo Maria. He ruled in peace and splendour for more than thirty years in Milan. But two marriages brought him no sons; only one daughter, and she illegitimate, cheered his magnificent palace. As the Duke grew old, men began to ask each other who should succeed him in Milan: his natural daughter, married to the great captain Francesco Sforza? or his nephew, his sister's son, the Duke of Orleans? or his wife's relations of Savoy? or, after all, must Milan return, a lapsed fief, into the foreign hands of the German emperor.

II.

Meanwhile a melancholy fate had pursued the French heirs to Milan, the children of Valentine and Orleans. This is not the place to explain how their young dissensions with their father's murderers summoned the English into France; or how the youngest, John of Angoulême, was sent to England, a mere child, in 1412, as a hostage for his brother's debt; or how, three years later, the defeat at Agincourt sent Charles of Orleans to join him there. The sons of Valentine remained in prison all their youth. When, in 1440, the son of their father's murderer, the gentle Duke of Burgundy, ransomed the Duke of Orleans out of bondage, Charles was a man of forty-six,* who returned home to find his estates half ruined by disastrous wars; his brother Philip dead; his half-brother a

* He was born 24th of November, 1394. See for the release of Orleans the excellent chapter in the Marquis de Beaucourt's "Histoire de Charles VII." t. iii., Paris, 1885.

hero—Dunois, the restorer of his country. It was late to regain his position in this altered world, but at least he lost no time. In the same month of the same year (November, 1440) Charles married a niece of Burgundy, Mary of Cleves. In 1445 his brother, John of Angoulême, newly released from England, married a neighbour of his sister's—Marguerite de Rohan, to whose elder sister he had been contracted in his youth. The two princes were determined to recover their inheritance, to raise up children, and restore the ancient dignity of their house. Much of Angoulême and much of Orleans and much of the inheritance of Bonne d'Armagnac was still in the hands of the English. The estates of Orleans in France were grievously diminished. And outside France Asti had been lost also.

In the year 1422, when Charles of Orleans had lain already seven years, and John ten years, in an English prison, when Philip of Vertus was dead, when France was paralysed, and Henry VI. of England crowned the king of France in Paris, the county of Asti, in great fear of the English (those Goths of the Riviera) and of the nearer jealousies of ambitious Montferrat, sent to Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, and begged him to receive Asti under his guardianship and protection* until such time as either of his nephews should be released from England. The Duke of Milan consented willingly. Asti was the Calais of Italy, and from the Italian point of

* See M. Leopold Delisle, Collection Bertrand d'Estaing, a long note about F. M. Visconti's protection of Asti, and secret instruction of Orleans to Cousinot, p. 135–40.

view it appeared intolerable and unnatural that this one county should remain a little island of France in Lombardy, a *pied-à-terre* across the mountains for invading Gaul. And now, after twenty years of undisturbed possession, the Duke of Milan turned a deaf ear to his nephew's reminder that he was home again and ready to reassume his inheritance. As a fact the Duke did not dare to restore Asti. In 1438 he had made Francesco Sforza his lieutenant there; and he was afraid of Sforza. It was in vain sending letters and requisitions; so in the beginning of the year 1441 the princes of Orleans sent Dunois to Milan.*

There were other matters more important even than the restitution of Asti, upon which it was well that a man so wise, so experienced, so persuasive as Dunois should confer with the uncle of his half-brothers. The Duke of Milan had no sons, one daughter only, and she was illegitimate. Therefore the princes of Orleans considered themselves the heirs to Milan. But they were not alone in expecting this inheritance. The Emperor pointed to the clause in the investiture of 1396 which declared that, in default of males, Milan should revert to the empire. Jacopo Visconti, a distant

* "The Bastard came with this requisition in the year 1442 to Milan, where I, Secundinus Ventura, saw him" ("Memoriale Secundini Venturæ"). Dunois went twice, February, 1441, and in 1451. In spite of Ventura's line, the date is fixed by a document communicated to me by Count Albert de Circourt (Pièces Originales Fontanieu, dossier 1185, No. 38: "Payez 200 écus d'or à nostre comis et féal frère le bastard d'Orléans sur ung voiage qu'il a fait pour nous au pais de Lombardie partant de nostre dicte ville de Blois au dict mois de Febrier dernier passé." Blois 22nd Mai 1441.

cousin of the Duke's, brought forward some pretensions of his own. Sforza, the husband of the Duke's natural daughter, thought of the house of Este and of other Italian houses where more than once a bastard, if courageous and beautiful, had succeeded to his father before legitimate heirs; and as to the fact that Madonna Bianca was a woman, had not Giovanna I. of Naples succeeded to King Robert, even in defiance of a Salic law? Meanwhile the princes of Savoy remembered that when the Duke of Milan had married the Savoyard princess he had made, upon receipt of her dower, a promise to her father and her brother that if no children sprang from this union, he would bequeath the titles of Milan to Savoy. It is significant of the strange confusion of the laws of inheritance in Italy that all these princes believed in the right of a Duke of Milan to bestow by testament, or deed or gift, or marriage-contract, that which was, in fact, a fief of the Holy Roman Empire. But the rights of the empire had fallen into long disuse across the Alps, where a strange confusion of kinship, bequest, investiture, or election by the people regulated the succession to Papal and Imperial fiefs. Some princes succeeded in one way, some in the other. To the eyes of contemporaries they all appeared justifiable alternatives, giving some shadow of right to that which a strong hand meant to grasp and meant to keep. "Most of the princes in Italy," wrote Commines fifty years later, "hold their lands by no title unless it be given them in heaven, which we can but divine."

Thus eyed suspiciously by rival heirs, Dunois, as

the representative of Orleans, crossed the Alps in 1441 and came to Milan, both to require the restitution of Asti, and also, as Ventura remarks, to confer on other matters with the Duke. The Duke of Milan was a sad, timid, indifferent man, old at five-and-fifty and harassed by an almost lunatic suspicion of danger from his friends. As he grew older his fears and doubts grew stronger, and he saw no motive for any sort of conduct beside the desire to succeed him in Milan. Oppressed by hypochondria, corpulent to deformity, fatigued by the weight of his body, and exhausted by the heaviness upon his spirits, this timid and sceptical Volpone of Lombardy found his sole amusement in weaving into a complicated perplexity the expectations of his heirs. Sitting immovable in his corner at Milan, like some huge spider spinning in the dusk, he crossed and recrossed, twisted and confused, in his dreary web, the hopes of Sforza and of Orleans, of Savoy and of the bastard cousins of his house.

No one could be sure of the succession. Sforza, the object of his senile fondness, was the object also of his insane suspicion. The Duke had tried a score of times to shuffle out of a promise to give him his natural daughter; and the very week that he had finally consented to their marriage, he sent a private messenger to Lionello d'Este, offering *him* the hand of Madonna Bianca. Nevertheless, in 1441 Sforza married Bianca, a mere girl, but bringing in her dowry the Signories of Cremona and Pontremoli, in addition to his lieutenancy of Asti. After the marriage he was no more sure of the Duke of Milan than

he had been before. The uncertain seesaw of the Duke's caprices continued as unsteady as of old. On the one hand, the Duke was aware that Sforza, though the son of a peasant, was the most remarkable Italian of his day, courageous, frank, spirited, kind of heart, and cunning. His immense strength of will both attracted and repelled the vacillating and suspicious Visconti. He admired Sforza, and Sforza was the husband of his only child. Still more, Sforza was secretly supported by Agnese del Maino, the mother of Bianca, the sole woman whose influence had ever touched the indifferent and preoccupied heart of Filippo Maria. On the other hand, the Duke was afraid of Sforzo—and to fear, in timid natures, is to hate.

When fear and suspicion sank the scale, Visconti inclined to his wife's relations of Savoy, who, having no right at all except such as he chose to give them, presented no cause for fear. Or he encouraged the claims of Jacopo Visconti. Osio, in a note, informs us that this Jacopo Visconti was the son of Gabriello, the bastard of Giangaleazzo, and had this been the case Jacopo Visconti would have had a certain claim. But Gabriello left no children, and Jacopo must have been the son of one of the numerous children of Bernabò. Nevertheless he considered himself to have pretensions. When all these had been weighed in the balance and found wanting, there remained the princes of Orleans.

In early life the Duke of Milan had been inclined to France; and he had been a suitor for that Princess Marie d'Anjou, who afterwards married King Charles VII. From 1420 to 1427 the pages of Osio abound in

messages and treaties. Then the vexed question of Asti began to embitter his relations with France, and to increase that fatal suspicion which ever made him turn with sudden loathing from his former friends. While his discontent with Anjou was still undecided, the Genoese handed into his custody the enemy of Anjou, the prince of Arragon, taken prisoner at sea. In their suzerain Visconti, the ally of Anjou, the Genoese imagined that they had found a sure custodian for Arragon. But they had not reckoned upon the personal charm of Alfonso the Magnanimous, nor upon the capricious indifference of Visconti. Young, handsome, engaging, fearless, their chivalrous captive won the heart of his timid jailer, and easily turned his fluctuating policy from Anjou towards Arragon. Visconti suddenly deserted his own subjects, released Alfonso without consulting the Genoese, and supported him upon the throne of Naples.

With some thought in his heart, doubtless, of the success of Alfonso, Dunois turned his steps to Milan. He also was handsome, persuasive, rhetorical; and if no longer young, his comely head was encircled by the aureole of heroic victory. But Dunois lacked the enthusiasm, the spontaneity, that, in Arragon, had warmed for a moment the numb and chilly heart of the Duke of Milan. Dunois was as cold, as sceptical, as wise, as worldly as himself. His flowers of speech made no real effect upon the weary Duke, who, to get rid of him, made, doubtless, some magnificent promise for the future; for Dunois did not insist on his demand for Asti, but returned almost immediately to France, hoping to settle matters by the friendly inter-

vention of the Emperor Frederic; but at that time the customary *malentendu* as to the occupation of Alsace estranged France and Germany, and Frederic declined to interfere with the projects of the Duke of Milan.

Dunois had not impressed the Duke, who was impressed only by youth, fearlessness, and a never-daunted will. He thought he perceived these qualities in the young Dauphin, half in disgrace on his estate in Dauphiné. Him also Visconti determined to drag into the tangled web of the Milanese succession; and about this time negotiations with the Dauphin Louis began to complicate the difficulties of Transalpine policy.

Already in the spring of 1445* a minute in the Archives of Milan, transcribed by Signor Luigi Osio, records the willingness of the Duke of Milan to further the Dauphin in his plan of an Italian invasion, provided that Louis agree to help the friends and not the enemies of Visconti. Asti should be confided to a person equally trusted by Orleans and Milan, and after the expiration of a given term should be freely handed back to the eldest son of Valentine. Notwithstanding this fair-spoken scheme, Visconti finds it necessary to caution his young ally against certain persons on the French side of the Alps who use threats and menaces towards the Crown of Milan. By these it is clear that he intends his nephews of Orleans. He has no friendship for them. *Noluit restituere*, briefly remarks Secundino Ventura.

* Feb. 23 (The Milanese began the year upon Dec. 25). Osio, vol. iii. cccxviii.

The negotiations with Louis proceeded briskly, and in May the Milanese ambassador arrived in Paris, where he found *grande garra e divisione* between the restless Dauphin and King René of Sicily, who he remarks (to our unfeigned surprise) *è quello che governa tucto questo reame.* Meanwhile Louis, young as he was, had already learned a maxim as true in policy as in almsgiving: he let not his right hand divine the secrets of his left; and while on the one side he treated with the Duke of Milan, on the other he practised with Savoy. According to the latter plan Savoy and the Dauphin, aided by Montferrat and Mantua and Ferrara, were to conquer between them the north of Italy; France was to take Genoa, the Lucchese, Parma, Piacenza, Tortona—all south of the Po and east of Montferrat; Savoy was to gain Milan and keep the Riviera; Alessandria was to be handed over to Montferrat, and the Duke of Ferrara and the Marquis of Mantua were, *for the present*, to keep their actual possessions; but this significant phrase was followed by one more significant still: "All future conquests are to be divided at the rate of two shares to France and one share to Savoy." *

An intimate acquaintance with documents inspires little confidence in the rectitude of human nature. Of all these personages, Charles of Orleans, a simple lyric creature, kept fresh and wholesome in arrested

* B. de Mandrot. See also MSS. of Bib. Nat., Lat. 17779, fos. 53–56; and for the correspondence of Pope Felix with his son, Duke Louis of Savoy, upon this subject, an exhaustive article by M. Gaullier in the eighth volume of the "Archiv für schweizerische Geschichte."

youth behind his prison bars, and Sforza, an honest, grasping and ambitious soldier, alone inspire respect or sympathy. This old duke, conscious that in a few months his immense possessions will have dwindled to a single grave, amusing the last hours of his sceptical, indifferent existence by juggling the expectations of a dozen heirs; this child-prince, without an impulse or an illusion left of youth, successfully deceiving a couple of enemies who each believes himself his sole ally—these unfortunately are no exceptions to the rule of the game.

Savoy, in the act of drawing up this project of conquest, was encouraging the Milanese to trust him to secure them a free republic on the death of the Duke. Montferrat and Mantua, pledged on the one hand to conquer Italy with the Dauphin, were as deeply pledged to Venice * to oppose the invader and preserve the peace. Each had been careful to risk something on every possible event, so that no sudden turn of the wheel of Fortune could bring about complete disaster.

On the 9th of February, 1447, an indiscreet French squire, riding to Rome upon a message, let out to the Florentines that a league had been formed between the Dauphin of France and the Duke of Milan.† According to this report Visconti had offered to aid

* Feb. 14, 1447. Reg. 17, fol. 106, Secreta, Venice. This document records the dismay of Florence and Venice upon learning the league of France and Milan. These two cities with Montferrat, Mantua, Angleria, and the other Lombard powers, joined in a solemn convention to oppose the common enemy and to preserve the peace.

† Desjardins, "Nég. dipl. avec la Toscane," t. i. p. 60.

the lad to recover Genoa, and had volunteered, in defiance of the rights of Orleans, to make him lord of Asti. A document in Osio (t. iii. ccclxxiii.) dated the 20th of December, 1446, and a series of letters in the Bibliothèque Nationale,* confirm this remarkable statement, which, if it spread horror throughout Italy, caused no less indignation among the heirs of Valentine. Strangely enough it was Sforza, at that time the Milanese governor of Asti, who advocated the cause of the Dauphin. "Give him Asti, and he will do you excellent service. Pay him well; and yet contrive it in such a way that none but your Highness shall be cock or hen in this country." This advice was rendered still more unpalatable to the Italians and to the house of Orleans by a rumour that the Duke of Milan intended to adopt the Dauphin as his heir. Before the month was out the north Italian princes formed themselves into a counter-league against France and Milan, and Orleans and Dunois had despatched to Milan the baillie of Sens, a certain Reynouard du Dresnay, with a demand for the immediate restitution of Asti. This time they would brook no refusal, they would be tempted by no future benefits. Indignant and disenchanted, they instructed their lieutenant to press the matter home; and on the 4th of May, Asti again returned to France. The conditions of the surrender were peculiar. The county was not directly given back to Orleans, but yielded to Du Dresnay as the lieutenant of the king,

* Bibl. Nat. MSS. Ital. 1584, Nos. 21 and 84, quoted by the Marquis de Beaucourt in the "Revue des Questions Historiques" for October, 1887.

so long as the said king should preserve the good will and consent of Charles of Orleans, *directus dominus ipsius civitatis et patriæ.*

In this matter at least the shifty Duke of Milan was outwitted. Asti had slipped from his grasp; France had again her hand upon the key of Lombardy. Much of his interest in the game was gone. As the summer waxed and waned, the Duke grew more than ever heavy, indifferent, and lethargic. He was not seriously ill, but, as I have said, his interest in the game was over. In August his health, always feeble, sank in the great heat of the summer. Immense in his unwieldly corpulence, the Duke sat in a darkened chamber of his palace brooding over his unfinished testament. He suffered no physician near him, and his illness—a low fever—was kept a secret. But the faint heart of Filippo Maria could no longer animate the weight of his body. On the 13th of August, 1447, he died—less of his illness, it was said, than of utter indifference, as one who, weary of the spectacle of existence, left his seat and retired whence he came.

Above the corpse, scarcely yet cold, the rival heirs, in eager expectation, gathered to the reading of the will. The Duchess-dowager represented Savoy; Madonna Bianca appeared for the absent Sforza; Raynouard du Dresnay came to Milan on behalf of Orleans; while, at a distance, Montferrat and Jacopo Visconti looked to their own interests; the Venetians had hopes of their own; the Milanese, as we know, intended to inaugurate a republic; the emperor, serene above these petty quarrels, declared that by feudal law Milan had already devolved to him.

Absent or present, there was not one of these, save him, but had some promise of Filippo Maria's in his mind when at length the testament was opened. The will was dated August 12th,* the day before the death of the Duke. There was no mention in it of his daughter, Madonna Bianca, none of his wife, none of any of his nephews or kinsmen. He left Alfonso of Arragon his universal heir.

Perhaps, as Guicciardini suggests, love of his people induced the dying Duke to leave his city to a distant tyrant; perhaps, in his suspicion of his present friends, his fancy turned with pleasure to the good bright youth who had been his captive long ago; perhaps his defeat at Asti made him like to think of the evil turn that once he had done the French in Naples; or, it may be, the mere desire of outraging the detestable *cohue* of his quasi-legal heirs proved irrestibly fascinating to the sceptical old man. At least so it was. Every right was outraged;† the King of Naples was left the Duke of Milan. "Nevertheless come here as soon as you can," wrote Antonio Guidoboni to Sforza ‡ on the 14th; "once on the spot and half the game is won."

* "Archivio Storico Lombardo," Anno iii. fasc. iv.

† Osio, ii. note to p. 2. In the hour of his death, on August 14th, the Duke drew a codicil leaving everything to Alfonso. Two days before he had left Alfonso *erede universale*, and Bianca *erede particolare*. Of course in either case she remained mistress of Cremona and Pontremoli.

‡ Osio quotes this letter, which exists in the Archives of Milan: *Fece el Re d'Arragona erede del tutto, non facta mentione veruna di M. B.* [*Madonna Bianca*] *ne de la mogliere ne d'altri. . . . Vegnate pur voi via senza veruna dimora; zonto siate qua lo mezo del giocho e vincto.*

III.

It was at this moment that for the first time the French claim to Milan became a question for practical politics. Frederic the Pacific was not the man to press the rights of the German Empire in Italy, rights which at this time were continually disregarded, and which nothing less than a military occupation could enforce. Even the Ghibellines in Lombardy declared, not for the Emperor Frederic, but for Count Francesco Sforza. Yet the Emperor Frederic was, so far as the legal and abstract side of the matter was concerned, the one really serious rival of the Duke of Orleans.

For Alfonzo of Arragon showed no inclination to take up arms in defence of his unexpected bequest. Although, in the city of Milan itself, he had a considerable party in his favour, at this time neither Alfonso nor his rivals appear to have regarded the will of the late duke in any serious spirit. The story ran in Milan that, in the week before his death, when that astounding testament was made, Filippo Maria had smiled and said, "It will be good to see how it will go to pieces when I am dead." A cynical pleasure in aggravating as much as possible this imminent ruin must, I think, have prompted the Duke to leave Milan to Alfonso. And if his detached, amused, malevolent soul could really from any extra-mundane point of vantage have watched the events which quickly followed his decease, he would have found the spectacle as exciting and as novel as he wished. The Milanese at once declared themselves a free republic, governed by various Princes of Liberty. Whereupon

all the subject cities announced that if Milan was a republic, so was each of them, for they would not submit to bear the yoke of a city no nobler than the rest. Hereupon such of the cities as were not strong enough to stand alone gave themselves, some to the Venetians, some to Savoy, some to Genoa, some to Orleans, some to Montferrat, some to Ferrara; and all these powers sent armies into Lombardy to protect their rights. Matters were still further complicated by the dissensions of the Bracceschi and Sforzeschi, the Guelfs and Ghibellines. In Pavia alone, for instance, the Guelfs declared, some for Venice, some for Orleans, some for the King of France, some for the Dauphin; the Bracceschi declared for Alfonzo of Arragon; Savoy and Montferrat each had a faction at their service, but the great body of the Ghibellines were in favour of Count Francesco Sforza, to whom finally the city submitted. This was a blow to the free republic of Milan next door; but in the miserable state of their dominions, the unfortunate Princes of Liberty did not dare to remonstrate with their too potent commander, and Count Francesco, sovereign at Pavia, continued to be the servant of the Milanese republic.

So soon as the news of the death of the Duke of Milan came to France, the French prepared to assert the rights of Orleans. On September 3rd Charles VII. wrote from Bourges to Turin, recommending the rights of Orleans to Savoy:—

"*Nostre tres-cher et très-amé frère, le Duc d'Orléans, à présent Duc de Milan* [asserts the king] *par le décès*

du feu Duc son oncle, qui est naguères allé de vie à trespas, comme son plus prochain hoir, nous a bien exprès faict dire et remonstré le bon droict qu'il ha au dict Duché de Milan." *

And Savoy, in all his further proceedings to obtain the protectorate of Milan for himself, excepts the French claim, against which he avows himself powerless to protest. This claim, theoretically so strong, had also in its favour the devotion—the veneration, says Corio—which the royal name of France inspired in the Guelfs of Lombardy; and in this moment of revolution the Guelfs, the democratic party, were exceptionally powerful. The governor of Asti, Raynouard du Dresnay, infected by the ardour of the times, could no longer await the coming of his master, but on September 22nd, furnished with 3,300 golden ducats of Asti, at the head of a little force of 1,500 men-at-arms, sallied out to plant the royal lilies of Orleans upon the soil of Milan.

Almost at once the inhabitants of Felizzano, Solero, Castellaccio, and Bergolio yielded to his arms. So many of the fortresses in the Alessandrino followed suit that Alessandria and all the country round were filled with fear. The force of Raynouard was very small, but inspired with so much fury, such fervour and cruelty of battle, that the softer Italians did not dare resist him. The smaller cities opened at his

* This letter is quoted in M. Gaullieur's interesting collection of documents from the correspondence of Duke Louis of Savoy, published in the eighth volume of the "Archiv für schweizerische Geschichte." Also in M. de Beaucourt's "History," *op. cit.*

knock, and even in the larger cities there was a party which, afraid of his vengeance, and fascinated by the prestige of France, would have welcomed him with open arms. Yet there were many, hating the stranger and his barbarian ferocity, who sent messenger after messenger to Sforza, bidding him arrive and deliver them. "Patience!" said Count Francesco. "In the first onslaught the French are more than men. Soon they will weary, and then we will attack them." But meanwhile, with undiminished energy, day after day the victories of Raynouard proceeded, and further and further into Lombardy advanced the banners of the king of France.

On October 1st an embassy from the unhappy republic of Milan arrived in Venice requesting aid and counsel. This, of a truth, was seeking sweetness in the jaws of the lion; for Lodi, Codogno, and other cities had already revolted to the Venetians, who hoped in time, by skilful management, to possess the greater part of Lombardy. But the bewildered Princes of Liberty knew not in whom to place their trust. Venice and Florence were leagued together, and each hoped to obtain something from the dismemberment of the territories of Milan; Montferrat, Mantua, Savoy, Genoa, and France, in open arms, were spoliating the corpse of their neighbour—for a corpse indeed it seemed—and of the captain-general of their own forces these heads of the republic were more profoundly suspicious than of any open foe. Too many of the nobles in Milan were secretly in favour of this adventurer. Only the people, the Guelfs, sustained their republican ardour with violent rhetoric, and

declared that they would rather be the servants of the Turk, or of the Devil, than of Count Francesco Sforza.

There was this in favour of Venice, that she detested Count Francesco (who had left her service for the Duke of Milan's) as bitterly as any Guelf in Lombardy. And Venice, the most aristocratic of oligarchies, was for complicated political reasons greatly favoured by the Guelfs. Therefore, not without hope in their hearts, the delegates of Milan awaited the answer of the Venetian senate. Three practicators, or agents, were deputed by the Ten to confer with the ambassadors concerning the proposed alliance between Milan and Venice; but these agents were secretly bidden in no way to commit or bind the Venetian government (*nichil obligando nos*); for the conference really was to be only a means of extracting information as to the true condition of affairs in Milan.* And it would be as valueless to us, as to the hapless, bamboozled Milanese, were it not that here we get, I think, the first evidence of the Venetian inclination to pronounce for France.†

There was no help here from the violence of Raynouard. Venice especially declared that against France and Genoa she would do nothing. And every

* Secreta, Reg. 17, fol. 171, tergo.

† *Sed si in colloquiis fieret mentio per ipsos oratores de serenissimo Rege Francorum, et de Januense, qui occupassent de locis que fuerant quondam ducis, in hoc casu, praticatores ipsi iustificare debeant, in modesta et convenienti forma verborum, factum præfati Regis, et Januensis; videlicet, quod per nos, contra eos, honeste et convenienter fieri non possit.*

day recorded the conquests of the French. The Milanese ambassadors returned very sadly, "despised by the Venetians," says Corio, "and treated as perniciously as possible." In vain they bade Francesco Sforza give battle to the audacious little force of Raynouard. Count Francesco, who had ever been favourable to France, pursued his waiting game, although Bosco Marengo, closely besieged by the French, was almost at the end of possible resistance, and the fall of Bosco meant the loss of Alessandria. At last the Milanese succeeded in scraping together about fifteen hundred soldiers, and these, under Coglioni, they sent to Alessandria to harass the enemy. The French were taken between two fires—on the one side Coglioni, on the other the Alessandrian reinforcements; yet at first they gained the day, but so furious was their anger, and so long they dallied in the slaughter of their enemies, that before they had despatched the last, a further reinforcement of the Milanese, and a successful sally on the part of the besieged, intercepted their return. Raynouard was taken prisoner with many of his men; the cities which had revolted to him returned to the allegiance of the Milanese republic; and the royal troops, leaderless and disbanded in the very hour of victory, fled home as best they might to Asti.

This was on Oct. 17, 1447. Twelve days later the Duke of Orleans himself arrived in Asti. There he made a solemn entry on Oct. 26th, riding under a dais borne by the notables of the city robed and hooded all in white, *pro majori letitia adventus ipsius domini ducis*. Charles of Orleans was now a man of fifty-

seven, amiable and sanguine. Something of the charm and of the inefficiency of youth appeared to linger around this aging poet, who, taken captive a youth of twenty-four, issued into the world again almost a man of fifty. Those intervening years had held for him none of the serious business of life: and his experience was still the experience of charming, ardent, and unhappy youth. Since Agincourt he had counted his years by lyrics, not by battles; and now perhaps one of the serious things to him in this contentious Lombardy was his friendship with Antonio Astesano, professor of eloquence and poetry at Asti, himself no inconsiderable versifier, and author of a poetic epistle on the victories of the Maid of Orleans, which in 1430 he had sent to the Duke in his English prison. Charles, with his serene unpractical temper, his interest in literature, his inexperience of life, hoping all things, doing nothing, appears a strange figure in that distracted Lombardy: a garlanded maypole stuck in the front of battle.

At first the arrival of the Duke of Orleans appeared an event of immeasurable importance. The Guelfs in every Lombard town, who at first had thought only of Venice, began, more loudly even than during the campaign of Raynouard, to declare for France. The Duke came armed with promises from France, from Burgundy, from Brittany, from England. There were no bounds to the magnificence with which he declared himself about to take the field. But perhaps it would not be necessary to take the field at all. The Duke sent a deputation to the Milanese republic; the

lord of Cognac, one of the nobles of Ceva, Caretti (whose family all the while were practising none too secretly with Montferrat), Secondino Natti, Antonio Romagnano, and Francesco Roero, requested the Milanese to submit to the allegiance of their lawful duke. But the Milanese were all too well aware of the hateful consequences of tyranny. Men were still alive whose brothers and whose children had been torn to pieces, limb by limb, by the hounds of Giammaria Visconti, the uncle of this man. The suspicion, the cunning, the timid fear of Filippo Maria had succeeded to that oppression. "This time," said the people of Milan, "we will preserve ourselves a free republic."

A show of force would at least be necessary to induce them to change their minds; and in December, 1447, Charles of Orleans sent an embassy to Venice,* requesting the Council to enter into an arrangement with him, and to furnish him with troops. He repeated his assurances of aid from France, England, and Burgundy; and if such aid as this were really forthcoming, Venice, animated by a limited Venetian and not by a national Italian patriotism, would certainly hesitate to cross his path. So bitter was the hatred of Venice towards Sforza, that any other candidate appeared preferable to him; and this douce, unready Charles would be easier to manage than a man of that heroic and ambitious type. Yet in a matter so important it was, before all things, necessary to be circumspect; and the Venetians put off the Duke of Orleans with many assurances of their

* Reg. 17, fol. 194, tergo. Dec. 30, 1447.

devoted adherence and affection, many warnings against the cunning and the machinations of Sforza, while they wrote to their allies of Florence requesting an opinion. At this instant Sforza was so dreaded in Italy, and his victory appeared so imminent, that if a few of the promised battalions had appeared in Piedmont the Venetians would gladly have espoused the cause of Orleans. But Sforza, left almost without money, with no ally that he was really sure of except his valiant wife, found the situation untenable. He had not a friend in Italy, nor a friend across the mountains. Peace, if only the feint of peace, was imperative while he collected his unvanquished forces for a further struggle. Early in January he wrote to Florence, proposing peace. The Florentines and the Venetians were bound in so close a league that peace with the one meant truce with the other; and though, at least twice, in solemn terms, the Council of Ten warned the Florentine Signory that there was no substance in this matter, for peace was contrary to the real interests of Count Francesco, yet in the end Venice agreed to accept this peace for what it was worth, using the hour of respite to further her stratagems in other quarters.

The peace was not worth much. On May 9th Andriano Ricci of Asti arrived in Venice with a message from the Duke of Orleans.* "The French reinforcements will soon be here," said the sanguine Duke; "will you also be my auxiliary?" The Venetians, though still cautious, replied in terms of alacrity—

* Reg. 17, fol. 221, tergo.

"We are ready to grant you all possible aid and favour, and there is no other prince on earth whom we so warmly desire to be our neighbour in Milan. Hasten the King of France, for if any good effect is to follow our endeavours, the troops should come at once. And rely upon it, so soon as your French auxiliaries are in readiness, we also will provide a satisfactory contingent to help in the conquest of Milan. And we are the readier to do this, since the peace which we had begun to treat with the Milanese republic is already broken, and we at this moment are in open war with Milan."

But, just at the instant when it would have given most pleasure to Venice to support the claims of Orleans, she began to feel grave doubts as to the solidity of his pretensions. Those promised armies of France, England, Burgundy, and Brittany, which had been on the road ever since last December, would they never cross the Alps? As yet not a single soldier had appeared. How far could Venice trust the assertions of the fanciful and sanguine Orleans? A strain in him of the Visconti shiftiness mingled with the rhetoric of his father, and for all his amiable simplicity Charles of Orleans was not a man to inspire conviction. The Venetians were, however, aware that Burgundy was really in his favour. It was Burgundy who had paid the ransom of Orleans, and Burgundy had twice sent his ambassadors to Venice, entreating the Ten in favour of his cousin. There was a great friendship between the good Duke Philip and the gentle Duke Charles; it seemed as if, having over-

come the tremendous barrier of an hereditary vendetta, these two men, whose fathers had each been murdered to satisfy the feud, entertained for each other an affection that had gained by the obstacles it had surmounted. If Burgundy, the richest duke in Europe, supported Orleans, it might be well to aid him even in the absence of France, England, and Brittany. But it would be disastrous to support the inefficient duke alone against such mighty odds. Yet some aid against Sforza was immediately desirable. To the Venetians, to have two strings to your bow was the first axiom of policy; and on May 20, 1448, the Ten despatched to Asti a secret messenger, one Messer Bernardo Neri, who was to interview the Duke,* to obtain all possible information as to his army and his auxiliaries, and then, in the utmost privacy, to proceed to Savoy in order to judge in which direction it best would suit the Venetian cat to jump.

Messer Bernardo stayed over a fortnight at Asti, although his commission was only for five days; and from this we may suppose that at first he really had expectations of the success of Orleans. But on June 10th † he left, ostensibly to return to Venice in order to receive the answer of the Senate; but in reality he went only a little way on the Venetian road and turned aside at once into Savoy, for at Turin he knew he should find further instructions from the Senate. He could only spend a day or two over his negotiations with the Duke there, for he had to return to Asti on the day when an answer might reasonably

* Reg. 17, fol. 220. Secreta del Senato, MS.

† Reg. 18, fol. 3, Secreta del Senato, MS.

be expected to reach that place from Venice. But his interview with Duke Louis was evidently satisfactory, for it is the first of a long series of negotiations.

Meanwhile Orleans in Asti found his affairs did not progress at all. The Venetians, though so prodigal of offers of assistance, declined to come forward until he had an army at his back. The Milanese refused to recognize him. Worst of all, the French appeared to have forgotten him. It seemed best to return to France and collect his forces. So on Aug. 10th, after a stay of nine months in Asti, Charles of Orleans with all his household went home again across the mountains. The Duke took back with him his friend Antonio Astesano, and ever afterwards he retained a strong affection for the country of his mother. The visit of Charles of Orleans to Asti was important as an introduction of Italian fashions, Italian architecture, Italian arms, jewels,* and vestments into France. It caused a pure whiff of Italy to breathe across the Gothic style of Charles VII. But it made little or no effect on the furthering of the French claim to Milan.

Orleans had scarcely crossed the Alps before he was as completely disregarded as though he had never seemed the most dangerous pretender to the throne of Milan. Savoy had taken his place. The claim of Savoy was quite childish and ridiculous. He pretended that, on the payment of his sister's dowry to the late Duke of Milan, Filippo Maria had promised to leave his duchy, in default of sons, to the Duke of

* Viollet-le-Duc, "Mobilier Français," iv. 454.

Savoy.* It was evident that the Duke had done nothing of the sort; he had left his throne to Arragon. Besides, it is difficult to see how his testament could dispose of property which, by his father's will and his sister's marriage contract, was entailed on his nephews of Orleans, and which, by feudal law, must return to the Holy Roman Empire. But, however shadowy his claims, the Duke of Savoy was a great person to the Milanese. He was loved by them and he was feared by them; and had he hazarded a bold stroke instead of counteracting his own efforts by a perfect maze of petty intrigues, he might easily have made himself, if not the Duke of Milan, at any rate protector of the Milanese republic.

But Duke Louis was afraid to hazard all his chances on any single throw. In 1446 he had intrigued with the Dauphin to divide the Milanese with France; on the 3rd of May, 1448, he drew up a secret and solemn contract with the Milanese to protect their republic, in consequence of which, a few months later, the grateful city privately elected him her chief. In June, 1449, he was arranging with the King of Arragon to conquer the estates of Milan with this ally, and divide them at the rate of three-fifths for Arragon and two-fifths for Savoy; † and in the autumn of the same year he was making a very similar proposal to the Venetians. In the pains he took to win something, however little, Savoy effectually safeguarded himself from winning all. Yet at one time he appeared to have great chances in his favour.

* Olivier de la Marche, "Mémoires," livre i. chap. 17.

† Secreta del Senato, Reg. 18, fol. 106, MS.

In the summer and early autumn of 1448, both Venice and the Milanese believed that a republic under the joint protection of Venice and Savoy might flourish in Milan, were it not for the undying energy and resolution of Count Francesco Sforzo. To be rid of this man was to be rid of war ; and twice in August and once in September the Ten wrote to a certain Lorenzo Minio, captain of the Brescia, that they accept a certain proposal he had made: "If the person he suggests will in truth deal death to Count Francesco we shall be his debtors."* According to the discretion of Minio they offered his candidate from ten thousand to twenty thousand ducats ; or, should he be of the sort that stoops not to money, he should have the captaincy of a regiment, of from two hundred to four hundred lances. "But," they proceeded, "let not the matter stick for a trifle—cheer him and inspirit him so that his resolution come to a good effect, and that speedily ; put him in heart with his work and let it be done well." The plain English of these phrases means that the Venetian Council was willing to pay a great sum of money to any one who would undertake to poison Count Francesco Sforza.

But before the proposal was carried out, a second message, five months later, bade the friend of Minio stay the destruction in his hand. "Count Francesco having entered into good and faithful relations with the Senate, we withdraw the order for his death." As suddenly as before and for as short a time an alliance was declared between the Venetians and the Milanese.

* Lamansky, "Secrets d'Etat de Venise," p. 160.

This alliance, as before, was merely an occasion for the resumption of intrigues. Arragon and Savoy, Savoy and Venice, Venice and Milan were secretly determining an arrangement which should exclude Francesco Sforza. It seems scarcely worth while to have countermanded the order for his death, since by some means or another to be rid of this adventurer was the aim and end of all this policy. The Guelfs of Milan sent to Venice a certain Arrigo Panigarola, who throwing himself upon his knees before the Ten, with tears and prayers implored the Venetians to defend his hapless city from Count Francesco. The Council was impressed, but decided to reserve its answer for a little while.

A few months after the arrival of Panigarola, the Duke of Savoy sent an ambassador to Venice upon a similar errand. How was it possible that the Venetians, so respectable a state, could support a wearisome adventurer like Count Francesco? Savoy gave the Venetians to understand that if they continued to supply soldiers to the camp of Sforza he should reckon his behaviour on their part a *casus belli*. How much better it would be if the Venetians would acquiesce in an honourable peace between the Milanese republic and Savoy and Venice! This threefold league would effectually crush Francesco Sforza, and would establish plenty and security in devastated Lombardy; whereas if the present dissensions continue, both Orleans and Arragon would certainly come across the mountains to seek their profit here, and so should a great fire be lit in Italy which much effusion of blood would never quench. The Savoyard ambas-

sador waxed really eloquent over the blessings of peace; for at this very time his master was writing to his father the Antipope at Lucerne: "The Milanese have secretly elected me chief, but what am I to do with Italy for Sforza, Germany for the emperor, and France for Orleans?" All indeed that he could do was *faire entretenir les Milanais par tous moyens, sans avoir dict encore ne* non, *ne* ouy; *et, d'aultre part, envoyer à Venise, et aussi envers le Comte François, et aultres où il est nécessaire practicquer quelque bons moyens par voye d'accord.** Of all these various plots the most successful for Savoy would have been a peace strong enough to set at naught Francesco Sforza, to restore prosperity to Lombardy, and to enable the Milanese to elect him, with apparent spontaneity, protector of their state. The first step was to secure peace with Venice; and he found the Venetians in an acquiescent mood. The important city of Crema had followed the lead of Lodi and Codogno, and had declared itself the subject of Saint Mark; and the Venetians, who could not keep Crema and continue to ally of Count Francesco, suddenly came to terms with Panigarola, declared themselves the champions of the Milanese republic, and offered the Duke of Savoy not merely a friendly neutrality but an offensive alliance.† They resumed their negotiations for the assassination of Count Francesco, and, "without a thought," says Corio, "of the league or law divine," despatched him a message informing him that they,

* Gaullieur, *op. cit.*

† Reg. 18, fol. 83. April 21, 1449. Secreta del Senato, MS.

his comrades in arms of yesterday, should become to-morrow his enemies upon the field of battle.

Count Francesco received the news with great gravity, without a sign of anger, or sorrow, or displeasure; although his situation was becoming really desperate; for, as the Venetian legate maliciously informed him, the Venetians were negotiating alliances with Savoy, with Arragon, and with the Pope. As to Savoy, Sforza forestalled them; for he forthwith despatched a messenger to Turin with terms so advantageous to Duke Louis that that unstable personage put the Venetians out of mind and settled into peace with Sforza: who, enabled to turn his entire force against Venice, drove his late allies back beyond the Adda, defeated them utterly at Caravaggio, made peace with them as a victor with success before him, and in the middle of October turned his arms against the Milanese republic.

Sforza had disarmed Savoy and conquered Venice; but he had not yet come to an end of his enemies. In November, 1447, Charles of Orleans seriously resumed his intentions of a Milanese campaign. Already in July, Burgundy had rewritten to the Venetians entreating them to favour Orleans; and the council had replied * that though their *acts* of late may have appeared hostile to the cause of Orleans, yet nothing but the instinct of self-preservation had ever induced them to make peace with Francesco, and their *sentiments* were still most loyal to the house of France. Nothing appeared more likely than a French invasion; Savoy already had warned the Venetians of

* Secreta del Senato, MS. Reg. 10, fol. 93. July 3, 1449.

it. On the 14th of November the Duke of Orleans wrote to the city of Asti,* saying that he was now positively certain of the alliance with Brittany and Burgundy, and that before Christmas, his army, under Jean Focaud, would arrive in Lombardy. This letter, written in a tone of the cheerfullest high spirits, was followed a week later by one equally sanguine and happy: *Dei gratia, omnia negotia Lombardie ad nos spectantia sunt in his presentibus optime disposita.* Jacques Cœur has pronounced himself favourable to the affair. And on the 4th of December Orleans writes that the companies of Foix and Bourbon are on the point of departure; and that John of Angoulême is arranging with the king for the reinforcement from the royal troops.

But Christmas came, and the phantom armies of the expectant Orleans remained as visionary as before. Yet on the 7th of January he writes, still sanguine, still bent on conquering his castle in the air: "The army will be larger than we thought; for all the French princes will lend their aid. Burgundy is sending great sums of gold and abundant troops into Lombardy." The Duke is as full as ever of his schemes and hopes. But this is the last of his letter; and before his messenger could bring an answer home from Asti, Milan had found a master among the ranks of Italy.

For famine and weariness and civil discord had broken the spirit of the Milanese republic. Even

* These four letters are quoted by M. Maurice Faucon from the Milanese Archive in his report of his two missions in Italy in the years 1879 and 1880, pp. 35–37.

Savoy, even Venice, were seized with pity, and murmured to each other that almost any change would be desirable, *ut hec afflicta et misera Lombardia, dudum guerrarum disturbijs lacessita, aliquando quiescere possit; tot populis, tot calamitatibus, totque oppressorum vocibus compatiendum et miserandum erat.* Anything short of the success of Count Francesco would be a happy alternative to such disaster. And in Milan itself the discontent was as pronounced. The Guelfs still vociferated against Francesco, but the Ghibellines, the party of the nobles, grew slowly and strongly in favour of the Count. All parties at last were out of conceit with this miserable liberty, which was but another name for civil disunion and ruin. Some were for the Pope, and some for Charles of France, and these were the Guelfs. Some were for Savoy, some for the King of Naples. But all these princes lived a long way off; they had no armies ready to combat the Venetians, whom each and every faction dreaded now and hated worse than famine. When one day Gasparo de Vimercato rose up in public conclave, and suggested that Milan should give herself to Count Francesco Sforza, it was incredible how suddenly the whole mind of the city turned towards the Count. The Count was the son-in-law of the late duke. The city was familiar with him. He was known to be humane and generous and strong. Should the city elect him, in one day he could dissipate the famine, the battles, the fear of enemies, and the suspicion of treachery, which for thirty months had made the misery of Milan. Leonardo Gariboldo, Aloigi Trombetta, and Gasparo da Vimercato were

sent at once to acquaint Count Francesco, that by the free voice of the people he had been elected lord of Milan.

Among the innumerable conspirators, intriguing diplomatists, and successful tradesmen who filled the high places of the Italy of that day, Francesco Sforza appears at least a man. Simple, direct, and brave, no sudden honour and no reverse of fortune took from him that natural dignity of a balanced mind which is one of the finest attributes of the Italian. Good sense and kindness made a moral force of this captain of adventure. He disciplined his troops, erected a court-martial, and punished offences of rape and violence by death; so that while the miserable populations of Lombardy had everything to fear from the other armies that occupied their soil, gradually they learned to feel themselves secure in the rough, mailed hands of Count Francesco. Among the soldiers his reputation was more than mortal. We have to leap over a dozen generations before the prestige of the Little Corporal present an analogy to such devotion. But Count Francesco was loved and respected even by his enemies; and there is a story of him which has ever struck me as among the most charming in military history. It was at the siege of Como, in that very February of 1450, when, unknown to him, the Milanese who had so long and so furiously resisted him, were crying, "Sforza! Sforza!" in an ecstasy of hungry enthusiasm in the great piazza. Meanwhile Sforza and his men were occupying Monte Barro; by means of a little hill in front, overlooking the Adda, and fortified by five bastions, they kept in

check the troops of Venice and Milan, ranged in impotent lines along the further side of the river. The bulwarks of the little hill were but slight, improvised in a few days for the occasion, and the poor Italian artillery of the fifteenth century, wrought no great destruction; yet such was the spell of Sforza's name, that the two armies across the Adda never ventured to try the place by assault. One night, however, it leaked out that Count Francesco was not in the fort; he had gone up the mountain to arrange a fresh disposition of his troops upon the summit of Monte Barro. In his absence it was decided to attack the hill, and in the late February dawn the Venetians and Milanese poured under the slender bulwarks, armed with artillery, which silenced that of the fort, and, planting their scaling ladders against the ramparts, they soon were in possession of the place. Now, as it happened, unknown to either army, late at night Count Francesco had returned home, and hearing the clamour in the place, he started out of sleep and strode at once to the ramparts, ignorant that the enemy had taken the place by surprise and that his soldiers, unaware of his presence in their midst, had already given the sign of surrender. "Defend yourselves, for I am here!" rang out the clear voice of the Count; and at that moment he perceived that he stood alone in the midst of his foes. But the mere fact of his presence was a better defence to his bastions than a world of soldiers. The assailants, like chidden children, withdrew from their positions, dropped the guns and pieces they were carrying away, and with uncovered heads made for their scaling-

ladders. As they passed the Count, standing alone there, they made for his hand—kneeling, crowding to touch it. "Father and ornament of Italian arms we salute you," cried the soft Venetian voices; and in little knots and groups, as quickly as they might, they dropped over the walls into the moat again, leaving Count Francesco the master of his ramparts. It was to this man, so eminently the hero of his hour, that the three Milanese delegates brought their news of the submission of the city.

On Feb. 25, 1450, Count Francesco Sforza rode into Milan. He rode at the head of his troops, and he had taken care that his future subjects should welcome the army; for every soldier was hung all over, from corslet, from waist, from shoulder, and from arm and hand, with loaves of bread—great clustering rolls and loaves that hid the armour underneath, as much as every man could carry. It was fine, wrote Corio, to see how the famished Milanese fell upon the troops, avidly tearing the longed-for food from neck and arm, and falling to at once (*con quanta ingordigia!*) upon the delicious bread. "Sforza! Sforza!" cried the citizens, a thousand times more eagerly than before. Some of them cried out in the words of the Psalms *Hæc est dies, quam fecit Dominus; exultemus et lætemur in ea*! Sforza was in the city; his troops and his bread had effectually secured his future. The Venetians might brew another poison. Charles of Orleans at Chauny might return that loan of men and gold which his cousin of Burgundy had lent him. Louis of Savoy wrote to his father at Lucerne: *Le Comte François a obtenu ceste ville par*

intelligence, déceptions et pratiques et non mie par force de guerre. All these pretenders, who had felt the bird already in the hand, must dissemble as best they might their disappointment. But Genoa * and Florence welcomed the chance of peace, and in November, 1451, joined in a defensive league with Milan against the Dauphin, King of France, the Duke of Savoy, and the Venetians. Lombardy was no longer the devastated battlefield of doubtful victory. Count Francesco Sforza was effectually the master of Milan.

IV.

It is one thing to have a thing by might, another to hold that thing by right. The theory that might is right appears sufficient in the hour of conquest, yet it is but a slender basis for future government; and Francesco Sforza, safely lodged in Milan, hedged round with troops, greeted as duke by the very citizens who had so long repulsed him, was none the less aware that men regarded him merely in the light of a successful usurper. Even in Milan there were many who regretted the loss of a legitimate dynasty; there were those who looked to the King of Naples, the adopted heir of the late duke; and there was a party anxious to proclaim the suzerainty of the Emperor; and a larger party still who placed their faith in Charles of Orleans, the legitimate descendant of the great Giangaleazzo. In the eyes of such men as

* Archives of Genoa. Materie Politiche, mazzo 12, 3. See also Charavay's "Report on the Italian Letters of Louis XI.," 1881.

these what claim had Captain Francesco Sforza, *soi-disant* Duke of Milan? He was merely a successful soldier, the husband of the late duke's bastard daughter, unmentioned as heir to Milan in any testament or codicil, who by force and famine had succeeded in imposing himself, as the alternative to starvation, upon the miserable Milanese. In the sight of the Emperor, Francesco Sforza had compromised whatever shadow of right he might once have had by accepting from the illegal hand of the people the imperial gift of his duchy.

Before the feudal law Francesco Sforza was merely a usurper, and a compromised usurper. To Orleans he appeared the representative of the illegitimate branch defrauding the legal heirs of their just claims. To Arragon, Sforza was the man who pockets treasure bequeathed expressly to another. The humiliation of this position is apparent. Yet Sforza, with much magnanimity, refused to ruin his subjects with taxes in order to buy the imperial investiture—a purchasable commodity, as his successors and his predecessors knew, and one which would have legalized his situation. At first, in the triumph of success, he appears to have enjoyed his illegal honours, his glory as a popular hero; and he affirmed that he preferred to rest his claims upon the people's voice. On March 25, 1450, they pronounced him Duke of Milan.

Sforza made a good ruler. Under him Milan ceased to be the prey of miserable dissensions and disorder, and the streets no longer ran with the cries of Guelf or Ghibelline. The soldier proved an excellent despot; not harsh or selfish, as might have been

expected from a man sprung from so little and taught in so rude a school. He governed the people for the good of the people, making his own gain but an accident of their advantage; and that magnanimous and disastrous impulse which made him refuse to tax the poor in order to purchase his investiture is characteristic of the man.

Yet even in Milan there were many ill content to thrive under the orderly government of this benevolent usurper. Many voices that famine had silenced soon began to whisper—Republicans, Orleanists, Guelfs, Ghibellines were alike jealous and ill at ease under the military dictatorship of Sforza. Another party in the city headed by the Dowager-duchess still kept alive the pretensions of Savoy, and he was able to write to Lucerne that on the whole the news from Milan was not bad, for the people were already beginning to dislike Francesco Sforza, and that Madame de Milan proved herself an efficient supporter of his claims.

But if there was discontent in Milan, outside the walls the success of Sforza was regarded with unqualified hatred and desire for vengeance. Savoy wished to oust him from his seat. France and Orleans and Arragon and Germany thought it sufficient for the present to brand him as usurper. But the hatred of the Venetians for the man who once had been their servant was of a deeper kind, and they did not shrink from plotting his murder. On April 22, 1450, they had already decreed his death, and by August 26th the plan was in full train. The Council had heard through that gentleman and soldier, Ser Giacobo

Antonio Marcello of Crema, that Vittore dei Scoraderi, the squire of Francesco, *est contentus occidere Comitem Francescum; et sicut omnes intelligere possunt, mors illius comitis est salus et pax nostra et totius Italiæ.* Nothing was to be sent in writing to this person which might compromise the Venetian Senate, but Marcello was instructed to offer him ample terms. Further injunctions were despatched on September 2nd, and early in December we hear again of a candidate, *una persona intelligente et discreta,* not a Venetian subject, who promised to despatch Count Francesco with *aliqua venenosa materies.** To this intelligent assistant the Council recommended the use of certain little round pellets which, thrown upon the fire, exhale a most sweet and delectable odour; but before they were despatched for experiment on so illustrious a subject a secret trial was to be given them in Venice on the person of a prisoner condemned to death for larceny. In May, 1451, the Council added three other persons to the conspiracy, and by June the proffered reward had grown to the extravagant sum of 5,000 ducats, with a yearly revenue of 1,000 ducats in addition, and liberty to recall four exiles. In return for so much munificence it is expected that Count Francesco "shall by your industry be despatched before the end of October." But in August an extension of leave was granted until December. Then the messages became frequent; and it is easy to divine that the noble person who is to despatch the Count is none other than Innocentio Cotta, a man of one of the great

* See the documents in Lamansky, "Secrets d'Etat de Venise," 161, 14, &c.

Guelf houses of Milan, who, despite his blue blood, was the most ardent champion of popular rights, and who is familiar to the readers of Corio's history as the head and front of that little group of *nobili audacissimi*, who in 1459, unbroken by famine and long misery, spurred the people of Milan on to resist the arms of Sforza, and plundered the party of the Ghibellines for money to furnish troops to defend the city. The success of Count Francesco had added ruin to the chagrin and hatred of this man, and one of the conditions that Cotta demanded of the Venetians was that he should regain *quelle forteze, terre e possessioni mie chio goldeva al tempo de la felice memoria del duca passato.* To this man, even as to the Council, it appeared that the death of Count Francesco could only be useful and fertile in good (*practica non potest esse nisi utilis et fructuosa, quum ex ea nullum damnum sequi potest*), and with the sentiments less of an assassin than of a lofty classic tyrannicide—a character ever dear to the Italians—Innocentio Cotta received, in his Brescian exile, the little round and perfumed pellets of poison.

No less than eighteen times between the August of 1448 and the December of 1453 did the Venetian Council instigate their assistant to the deed. Poisons were despatched to him and apparently administered. But the venom of the Venetians was more odious than fatal. Their poisons, sublimated from an irrational medley of volatile substances, had no regular chemical action, and the receipts of them which remain exhibit an incoherent confusion of mercury, sal-volatile, copperas, cantharides, burned yeast, salts

of nitre and arsenic, from which, after the endless simmerings and powderings of their preparation, the most deadly qualities had evaporated, and which left (according to the analysis of Professor Boutlerow) a comparatively harmless combination of ammoniacal chlorides.

The sedative prescription made no perceptible effect upon the iron constitution of the *soi-disant* Duke of Milan. He probably remained in total ignorance of the poison so frequently administered in the unbroken Venice glasses; but he could not remain equally unaware of the distaste and suspicion which environed him, and he grew to desire some superior show of legality. The troops and bread, with which he had convinced the Milanese, were admirable agents, but they could not do everything. Francesco Sforza had six young sons, and in his heart there increased that invincible longing to found a dynasty which has overcome so many conquerors. Somewhere in the Archives, he began to think, in some unfound testament or neglected codicil, there must be surely some mention of his wife, the late Duke's only child. With possession already in its favour, the slightest mention in the old Duke's will would serve to legalize the dynasty of Sforza. But nowhere in will or codicil was there any last reversion in favour of Madonna Bianca. The searchers only brought to light the testament of Giangaleazzo, which bequeathed Milan, failing direct male heirs, to the sons of his daughter Valentine.

Still, if Francesco Sforza could not legalize his own succession, he could at least secure himself against

the raising of better-founded claims. On February 19, 1452,* Count Francesco wrote to Andriano Oliari of Pavia (the Oliari were a family of notaries to whom for generations the Archives of Milan were entrusted) commanding him to come at once to Milan and to bring with him to the palace the original will of Giangaleazzo Visconti,

"for [he explained], because of certain matters which fall out at present, it is necessary that we see the testament made by the illustrious quondam duke the first. . . . Thou must come to-morrow, Sunday, the twentieth of the present month, here, to our presence, and bring with thee the said original will. . . . And we advise thee, that for the viewing of the said will we will deal with thee according as thou wouldst."

Oliari and his father before him had been servants of the legal Dukes. Something in the tone of Sforza's letter, its awkward mingling of the menace and the bribe, gave pause to the faithful notary. He had no mind to render up so sacred a deposit to the tender mercies of this blunt old soldier, who signed himself "Cichus" (Frank), and who was wholly without the dignity of the legitimate tyrants. Oliari wrote back and said that he believed a copy of the original will would be found to answer every purpose.

The so-called Duke of Milan was irate, and de-

* Ghinzone, in the "Archivio Storico Lombardo," Anno ix, Fasc. 2, 1882, quotes the original documents from the Milanese Archives, Reg. Miss. N. 12, foglio 40. The letters are all of the greatest interest.

spatched a curt letter to the suspicious and insubordinate lawyer, and by the same messenger he sent a line to the Castellan of Pavia, informing him that Oliari had not come, and bidding him despatch the notary at once, *cum dicto testamento et non cum la copia.* But neither the Duke nor the constable of the castle could induce Oliari to go back from his decision. "I really cannot come," he replied to Sforza on February 24th, "for I have neither money nor horses." Now Pavia is not so long a journey from Milan, but that, to serve a sovereign, a man might borrow his neighbour's hackney. The same day, the 24th, the Duke replied in anger, both to Oliari and to the castellan, that he could not conceive why it should be so difficult to come at the said testament. "And forasmuch as you hold dear our favour, and under pain of rebellion, you must be here with us to-morrow with the said will, for if you dost not come we will make you repent it." Oliari dared not hold out against so ominous a command. He made in secret five copies of the precious document, and then we may suppose that he took the original to Sforza, for no more letters require it from his custody. Thus the original will of Giangaleazzo Visconti was destroyed.

But while Sforza was stooping to a crime in order to protect himself against the rivalry of Orleans, as a fact that pretender was less dangerous than he had been before. However good his claim might be, his inefficiency was a terrible counterpoise. When,* at

* Reg. 20, fol. 1. Secreta del Senato, MS. January 3, 1454.

the new year of 1454, Alfonso the Magnanimous wrote to Venice requesting the government to continue their relations with Orleans, the Venetians replied that Orleans was too far off and too unready. They were as desirous as Arragon to get rid of the usurper. A month before they strove to enlist Arragon in favour of their novel candidate, they had written to Savoy,* asking Duke Louis to join with them in requesting the Dauphin of France to invade Italy and suppress Francesco Sforza. They proposed that the Dauphin should conquer the Ticinese and Piacenza for himself, and the Duchy of Milan for the Duke of Orleans. In case the Duke was not minded to go to this expense and danger for a cousin's sake, the Venetians let it be understood that any French prince would be agreeable to them upon the throne of Milan.

V.

The House of Orleans had no more dangerous enemy than the royal house of France. Matters had greatly changed since, immediately after the liberation of Orleans, Charles VII. had seconded his claim to the Milanese. The reduction to insignificance of the great feudal houses in general, and particularly the reduction of Orleans, was now the policy of the French crown; and at that moment the policy of the already inscrutable Dauphin appears to have been the conquest of a kingdom which should comprise the Dauphiny, the Ticinese, Asti, the Piacentine angle of

* Reg. 19, fol. 232. Secreta del Senato, MS. December 11, 1453.

the Emilia, and the entire stretch of Liguria. To the restless contriver of a plan so bold the claims of Sforza and of Orleans came equally amiss; and, in secret, the chief enemy of either credulous pretender was the Dauphin.

Sforza, however, had little to fear from Orleans, and less from the French. In fact, in King Charles he found at this difficult period his ablest friend. The records of the Archives of Milan, from the year 1452 until the death of King Charles, abound in friendly letters, and are evidence of the cordial relations existing not only between the Duke of Milan and the King of France, but between the House of Sforza and the royal Governor of Asti. In 1459 the King besought Francesco to ask the hand of the little Princess Marie d'Orléans for his only son; but we may presume that Orleans would not consent to so much recognition of the usurper, for the negotiation came to nothing. Yet with the Court of France Francesco continued on terms of affectionate friendship and mutual respect.

In 1453 the Dauphin still had designs on Italy, and offered to the Venetian Signory his aid in Italy to combat Count Francesco.* It was arranged that he

* "Secreta," tome (*sic* Reg?) xix. fol. 211, under date August 31, 1453, quoted M. Étienne Charavay in his "Rapport sur les Lettres de Louis XI. conservées dans les Archives d'Italie." The following documents from the Venetian Archives—as yet, I believe, unpublished—form the natural sequel to this interesting letter:

"Senato" I., Reg. 19, fol. 232, under date December 11, 1453.—The Venetians send Venier to ask Savoy to join with them in requesting the Dauphin to invade Italy: "Venier

should come with from eight to ten thousand men, dispossess Sforza, and conquer for himself a Duchy

must ascertain the views of the Duke of Savoy as to Sforza, since King René comes into Italy. Let him clearly understand that Sforza is a most ambitious man, and that if he continue to prosper as he does he will certainly turn his thoughts towards Savoy. Venice not only intends to secure her own estate, but for the sake of her friends and allies will as much and as resolutely as possible repress the said Count Francesco Sforza, who may become the Common Enemy. And to this end Venice has determined to request the aid of France, and among others the aid of the Dauphin, asking the said Dauphin for the common good to invade Italy with a force of from 8,000 to 10,000 men. And we of Venice entreat Savoy to send a suitable ambassador along with ours to persuade the said Dauphin to this undertaking. And our intention is to grant the said Dauphin a suitable subvention in money and whatsoever he may conquer from Adda to Ticino, and from Padua to Piacenza, except the domains of Savoy and Montferrat. . . . Let Venier then discover how many men and of what sort and when Savoy could supply to the field. . . . And if my Lord Dauphin stand out for the consent of his father, you shall offer on our part to implore it and procure it for him. And if he wish you to go to the King you shall go, and, as best you can, procure his consent. . . . And if the said King or Dauphin say to you this undertaking regards the Duke of Orleans, say it is true that on the death of Filippo Maria he sent to us notifying his claims (and fain would we see a prince of the house of France on the throne of Milan!), and saying he expected supplies from France, and we assured him of our delight and pleasure ; and if indeed the King or the Dauphin, at your instance, will supply the said Lord Duke with an army of from viii. thousand to x. thousand men, we will aid and assist him upon the same terms and conditions as my Lord the Dauphin. And go then to the Duke of Orleans and persuade him to the enterprize."

Reg. 20, fol. 26, July 23, 1454.—This document concerns a League meant to secure Italian peace by means of an offensive and defensive alliance, against all breakers of the peace, to be made between Venice, Milan, Florence, and Naples. Florence

of Milan to extend from Adda to Ticino, from Padua

desires an exception in favour of the house of France. At this Milan, much alarmed, desires Venice by a secret and separate agreement to sign the First Clause at least with him. Venice sends ambassadors to Florence and to Milan, pointing out that the First Clause is absolutely necessary, since, without it, there is no reason why the King of Arragon should enter the League. Indeed if an exception be made in favour of France, it will only and justly irritate him, and thus the alliance would bring rather discord than peace into the Peninsula. No specific mention need be made of the house of France, to which Venice entertains the most friendly feelings. But if the First Clause were signed and Arragon induced to enter the League Italy might look forward to many years of peace and tranquillity.

Reg. 20, fol. 103, October 8, 1456.—The Marquis of Varese, ambassador to the Duke of Milan, informs the Venetians that he Doge of Genoa—notwithstanding his open alliance with France and apparent subjection to her—has made a second and secret alliance with Arragon and Milan, in which Venice is prayed to join, against the French. The Venetians reply that, owing to the mutability and diversity of Genoese affairs, it is impossible to give any solid advice.

Reg. 21, fol. 21, October 10, 1465.—The descendants of Valentine Visconti—*i.e.*, the Dukes of Orleans and Brittany and the Count of Angoulême—sent secret ambassadors to Venice to treat concerning the recovery of the Duchy of Milan from the hands of Count Francesco Sforza. Venice replies with compliments, but expresses herself desirous to keep the peace.

Reg. 22, fol. 176, July 28, 1466.—French ambassadors have been received at Venice from Louis XI., King of France. Venice assures him of her excellent disposition towards the new Duke of Milan as well as of her "antiqua benivolentia" towards his father. Venice believes a resumption of the Italian League is not at that moment necessary, extols King Louis fo his intention to proceed against the Turk, and congratulates him on the quiet of his realm.

The Latin originals of these documents will be included in the volume of "Pièces Justificatives," for my History of the French in Italy, 1378–1530.

beyond Piacenza. Or, if the King and the Dauphin would guarantee the army, Venice professed herself willing to aid the Duke of Orleans in the same undertaking. But while these princes were arranging their future conquests, a spirit stronger than they was making these conquests impossible—a spirit which, a score of years ago, had begun to draw together Scotland and England, those ancient enemies, to the alarm of France; a spirit which had estranged Burgundy and Brittany from their English companions in so many battles, and which was leading them to the feet of the long-despised and outraged King of France; a spirit which now should reconcile Venice with Sforza, Florence with Milan, and make, for a brief moment of millennium, those immemorial foes at peace together; a spirit which awoke in these middle years of the fifteenth century—aroused Heaven knows whence or how—and strangely changed the world it breathed across: I have named the spirit of Nationality.

At Christmas-time in 1453 the Venetians spared neither pains nor prayers nor promise to induce the Dauphin to come and suppress Count Francesco Sforza. In April of the next year * they sent to tell him, as delicately as possible, that they had no further need of his services (a refined way of informing him that they would oppose him), since they had made peace with the man whom four months ago

* Reg. 20, fol. 17, April 26, 1454.—"Ordre à Francesco Veniero de prévenir le dauphin, avec tous les ménagements possible, qu'ils ont faiz la paix avec Francesco Sforza et qu'ils n'ont plus besoin de ses services" (Charavay, *loc. cit.*).

they had called the Common Enemy of his countrymen, and whom they had so many times endeavoured to assassinate. And probably the Dauphin was not sorry. For the spirit that animated these Italians inspired him also. Already it had touched his intelligent and sensitive spirit. Already, in 1447,* he had laughed for joy when the French lost Genoa, and had declared "le Roy se gouvernoit si mal qu'on ne pouvoit pis." In the five years between 1445 and 1450 the Dauphin had passed from the friendship of Orleans to the friendship of Burgundy, and his ideal had changed. He raged to see the King prefer Italy to the north, and amuse himself with taking Genoa and securing Asti when he should have set to conquering Normandy. He said aloud that the true place for such a King as that was in such a Hermitage as the Duke of Savoy's. He plotted to seize the government of affairs himself, and leave the King, in prosperous desuetude, to amuse himself with his Belle Agnès and his pleasures. As we know, the plot fell through, and the impatient Dauphin, a discomfited fugitive, was himself the one to seek a hermitage at the Court of Burgundy. There he spent five years of chafing exile and mortification while his father ruled France, not unsuccessfully, after his own fashion, pursuing shadows indeed in Italy, yet at home administering affairs and inventing a regular army with no less zeal and skill for this extraneous ambition. Louis was still at the Court of Philip of Burgundy when, in 1461, he heard the news of his father's death. And

* Quoted by the Marquis de Beaucourt, iv. p. 244, from the "Procès de Mariette."

the prince who, of all others, should do most for the reintegration of his country ascended the throne of France.*

As we know, the law of historic necessity required that the Dauphin should renounce his ambition of a North Italian state—he had, in fact, already renounced it; that he should abandon his early visions and his early friends, and adopt for his counsellors the very men who once had ruined him. Henceforth he must bend the whole strength of his spirit to the furthering of that policy which he had so long, and at so great a sacrifice, resisted and attempted to destroy. The interests of the time required that France should forego all ambitions foreign to herself in order to consolidate herself; that she should sacrifice the south in order to insure the north; that she should also sacrifice the aristocracy to the people; and Louis XI., who, as a prince, had paid so dear for his adherence to the rights of the nobles, became the monarch who more than any other was governed by men of low and base condition—who more than any other oppressed and resisted the pride of feudalism. Those who had been his friends became his enemies; those likewise who had been his enemies became his friends. Francesco Sforza, from whom he had been so eager to take his duchy, became the one man alive whom he admired and respected. Yes, this successful captain of adventure, who for years had prevented him in Milan, in Naples, and in Genoa, who once had

* "Procès de Mariette" in the Preuves de Matthieu d'Escouchy, p. 290. See Marquis de Beaucourt, "Histoire de Charles VII.," pp. 207 *et seq.*

been the chief stumbling-block in the path of the Dauphin, became the corner-stone of the policy of the King. Like Catherine de' Medici, like Rodrigo Borgia, like most unscrupulous rulers, there was something oddly magnanimous in the moral indifference of Louis IX. Sforza never suffered for his enmity of yore. The new King of France was a being as destitute of rancour as devoid of gratitude.

With Savoy, Orleans, Dunois, and Anjou the new king was ill-disposed to treat. He had learned the secret of their intrigues and their ambitions. On May 10, 1463, he wrote to Sforza that he was content to come to an understanding with Milan, if Milan would utterly disavow Savoy. This conspirator, versed since boyhood in all the dismal ins and outs of treachery, was too well aware of the tricks of his confederates.* It still might be possible that his enemies were honest. They at least were the only people he could trust; and more than any other he confided in Francesco Sforza. In December, 1463, he made to the *de facto* Duke of Milan the significant cession of the French claim to Genoa.† He also arranged for the cession of Savona. Negotiations were even begun for yielding Asti to Francesco Sforza; but the inhabitants declared that they would stand by the house of Orleans.

* March 14, 1451, Amédée of Savoy had promised to assis the Dauphin against all, "even against the King of France" (Charavay, *l. c.* p. 34). This had a different aspect after Louis' coronation.

† Dumont, iii. ccxxviii.

At first the cousins of the King could not believe that he had actually abandoned them—he who had begun his career as the pupil of Dunois, and had suffered so long as the champion of the nobles. So late as October 10, 1465, the descendants of Valentine Visconti sent a very secret embassy to Venice* to propose to the Ten a league between their government and the Duke of Orleans, the Count of Angoulême, and the Duke of Brittany, for the purpose of ousting the usurper, Count Francesco, and delivering the Duchy of Milan to Charles of Orleans. This league, which could not be confirmed by the Pope, a political adversary, might, it was suggested, be headed by the King of France. Probably the Venetians were better informed as to the real intentions of Louis XI. Certainly they knew that it was too late or too early to dream of dislodging the Sforzas from Milan. They replied that they loved the house of France, but that peace also was dear to them: they begged to be excused from attacking Count Francesco.

After this for many years the house of Orleans ceased to struggle. Before the year was out Charles of Orleans was dead, and the French pretender to the crown of Milan was only an infant, three years old. Before the child was six Dunois was also dead. Dunois—who had not suffered the children of his adoptive mother to be cheated of their inheritance in Asti—would, had he lived, have instructed his nephew in the details of his claim to Milan. But Louis II. of Orleans, born in his father's seventy-second year, was naturally doomed to lose in infancy his father's con-

* Secreta del Senato, MS. Reg. 21, folio 21.

temporaries. As the child grew up every link was severed that might have bound him to the past, and he knew little or nothing of the pretensions of his house. His mother, who had a romantic worship for the memory of Valentine Visconti, related to her son many a legend of the quasi-royal power which during the last century his ancestors possessed. But that supremacy seemed at an end for ever. In France, in Italy, the star of Orleans suffered a long eclipse. By his own experience in rebellion Louis XI. was aware how dangerous to the Crown and how disastrous to the kingdom was the power of the great feudal houses. Alençon and Armagnac and many another he diminished by confiscation and captivity ; Dunois, Bourbon, Saint-Vallier, Sancerre, he attached to the Crown by royal marriages. Kinship in subjection, independence in imprisonment : these were the two alternatives presented by the King to the nobles of France. Among the most unfortunate of those who accepted the former gift was the young Louis d'Orléans. Louis XI. had decided that with this young man the house of Orleans should end ; and when its representative was eleven years of age, the King married him to Jeanne of France, a gentle girl, deformed, incapable of offspring, and so ugly that when she was brought to court for her wedding the king himself exclaimed : *Je ne la croyais pas si laide.* To this bride the young duke was married in 1473. " They will have no expense with a nursery," wrote the malicious King to Dammartin : *ils n'auraient guères à besoigner et nourrir les enfans qui viendraient du dit mariage : mais toutefois se feroit-il.*

Meanwhile the six sons of Sforza had grown to manhood; and the eldest ruled in Milan, accepted, by the mere fact of his unchallenged succession, as the lawful inheritor of his father's duchy.

VI.

When Louis II. of Orleans had reached the age of twenty he was the best archer, the most dexterous horseman, the most adroit and brilliant man-at-arms about the Court of France. He was handsome, fond of the arts, and well instructed. He had an engaging manner, gentle, gracious, and benign. A brave and eager cavalier, he was ready for adventures; but a strong hand kept him down, a hand whose cruel restraint was never lifted from that audacious brow. Suddenly the pressure ceased: the hand was gone; on August 30, 1483, King Louis died.

He was succeeded by a child of fourteen, an ugly, ignorant youth, who had grown up neglected in the castle of Amboise, far from the Court, alone with his gentle forsaken mother, Charlotte of Savoy, who had taught him the only thing she knew, the plots of innumerable romances of chivalry. For Louis XI., partly afraid of injuring the delicate constitution of his only heir, and partly remembering his own dangerous and rebellious childhood, denied any solid education to his son. He never saw the boy, leaving him for years at a time to grow up as best he might alone with his mother at Amboise. "Let the body grow strong first," said the King; "the mind will look to itself." And, according to tradition, the sole food

that he provided for the eager mind of his son was one single Latin maxim : *Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare.* This was all the Latin that was taught to Charles VIII., and on this solitary morsel of classic attainment he was never known to act. Louis XI., for all his subtlety, had forgotten that by simply withholding one sort of education you cannot insured vacuity. The child at Amboise knew nothing of history, nothing of geography, nothing of the classics. But his mind was stuffed with the deeds of Roland and Ogier, and the beauty of *La belle dame sans merci.* Suddenly one summer day, unwonted messengers knocked at the gates of Amboise; they fetched the child away to see an old, misshapen, suspicious man, whom he did not know—who was his father. The next day Charles VIII. was king of France under the regency of his married sister, Anne de Bourbon. Madame Anne inherited her father's dislike and distrust of Orleans; but her sister was his wife and adored him, and her brother, the king, admired him. She did her best to repress Orleans in France; but her hand, though firm, had not the solidity of her father's. Orleans grew and expanded.

Just at this moment Venice was in sore distress. Almost every power in Italy was against her, and she turned for help to France. On January 16, 1484, she sent Antonio Loredan to Charles VIII., complaining of the aggressions of Naples, Milan, and Ferrara, and desiring a resumption of the Franco-Venetian league of Louis XI. That league had been a very tame and passive piece of policy; the Venetians hoped a bolder favour from a younger king. Loredan was bidden to

insist upon the suggestion that the kingdom of Naples occupied by Ferdinand of Arragon, belonged in fact to France.* "Nor content with that," run the instructions of the Senate, "this king it was who instigated Lodovico Sforza to the usurpation of Milan." Lodovico il Moro,† the fourth son of Count Francesco Sforza, had, as a matter of fact, usurped the position of his nephew in 1481, and, though nominally regent, conducted himself as Duke of Milan. But this intrusion was not the seizure which now the Venetians meant to blame. They wished to suggest, as the lawful claimant, not the young son of Galeazzo Sforza, but the Duke of Orleans.

"Express to the Duke of Orleans in secret our desire for his exaltation [run the instructions given to Loredan], and explain to him how good is the opportunity for him to recover the Duchy of Milan, which belongs to him by right; and how his claim would be favoured by the differences and dissidences at present existing between ourselves and Milan, as also by the discontent of the Milanese with their tyrants. Inform the Duke that Lodovico Sforza aspires to seize the sovereignty for himself, amid the murmurs of his people, and that he will certainly massacre all who

* MSS. Secreta del Senato, Reg. 31, fol. 123, tergo.

† Many reasons have been given for the assumption of this surname. As a fact it appears to have been a baptismal name. In February, 1461, Bianca Maria Sforza sent to the shrine of the Santo at Padua the silver image of a child, *ex voto* for the recovery of her fourth son, Ludovicus Maurus, *filius quartus masculus*, aged five years. ("Archivio Storico Lombardo," Anno xiii; Caffi on B. M. Sforza.)

uphold the claim of the Duchess Bona. Inflame and excite as best you can the Duke of Orleans to pursue this enterprise, . . . and if the French should choose to make good their claim to Naples as against the tyrant Ferdinand, they could not find a better time than now." *

This is the programme of the great invasions of 1494 and 1500; but the times were not yet ripe. On February 4th the Ten despatched a second missive to the Duke of Orleans,† instigating him to the speedy conquest of Milan, and offering him the entire Venetian army for this service. The young Duke appears to have taken these proposals very seriously, and the project created some disturbance and quarrelling at Court. But the Venetians were incapable of any sustained policy in foreign affairs; to serve Venice in the way that at the moment appeared most advantageous was their only aim, and thus their attitude was one of constant unrest. In August they made peace with Naples and Milan, and sent word to Orleans that they were glad to hear that all disunion was at an end between him and the King. The same thing had happened in Italy. Peace had set in under the happiest auspices, and a fraternal affection united the King of Naples and the Regent of Milan with the Venetian Senate.

So ended the project for a French succession. Louis of Orleans, thwarted of his foreign ambition, strove for greatness at home, and contested the regency with

* Reg. 31, fol. 131, tergo.
† Reg. 32, fol. 87.

Anne of Bourbon. The civil war, the flight into Brittany, the pretensions of Louis to the hand of his beautiful cousin (the heiress to that duchy), the defeat of the Orleanist troops at Saint-Aubin on July 28, 1488, and the three years' captivity of the Duke, are matters of common knowledge. But as Charles VIII. grew out of the tutelage of his sister, more and more he grew to favour his imprisoned cousin. There was little to fear from him now that the King was a major, and Anne of Brittany the Queen of France. In 1491 the Duke was released; and when in 1494 Charles at the head of his troops invaded Italy, Louis of Orleans preceded him across the mountains, chief in command, master of the fleet, destined to drive the Neapolitans from Genoa, and thence to lead the fleet of France into the port of Naples.

VII.

The invasion of Italy by Charles VIII. appeared, even to contemporaries, a miracle. The young King, ill advised, without generals, without money, with the impromptu army of a moment's whim, traversed hostile Italy as glorious as Charlemagne. Charlemagne, in fact, was the true leader of his forces: for that glorious phantom marched before him, filling with dread the hearts of the enemy, and blinding them to the actual penury of the invader. With the events of that romantic campaign we have no business at this moment, for, notwithstanding his commission to lead the fleet to Naples, the Duke of Orleans did not go south of Lombardy. While Orleans was

gaining the battle of Rapallo, suddenly the King arrived at Asti. It was Sept. 9th, a malarious season. Across the wide plain, the marshy fields of Lombardy, Orleans galloped, fresh from victory, to a council with the King. He had scarcely arrived at Asti when Charles fell ill of the small-pox. The attack was slight, and within a fortnight he recovered. But the very day the King began to mend, Orleans sickened of a quartan ague, and when his cousin was well again and ready, on Oct. 6th, to set out for Naples, Orleans was still unfit to take the road. He sent his company south with the royal troops, and with a handful of squires and servants remained behind in his hereditary county of Asti, among the subjects who had loved his father, and who had served himself, far-off, unseen, through years of peril and intrigue, with as devoted and chivalrous a spirit of loyalty as ever the highlanders of Jacobite Scotland dedicated to an absent Stuart.

Sforza and Orleans were now the nearest neighbours, bound to each other by their interest in the King. Fate has seldom brought about more ironic complication. When Lodovico Sforza, out of revenge and anger towards King Ferdinand, had revived the French claim to Naples, and had instigated Charles to enter Italy, he had not foreseen the accident that left the Duke of Orleans within a league or two of Milan. Charles VIII. entered Italy as the friend and guest of Lodovico il Moro, the Regent of Milan. To the external and uninitiated world the French claim to the duchy appeared about as actual as the claim of the English kings to France. Lodovico il Moro,

familiar with the France of Louis XI., knew that the claims of Orleans were not likely to be countenanced by the throne.

The present is never clear to us. Its Archives, its Secreta, are not given over to our perusal. Lodovico il Moro was probably uninstructed in that secret policy of the Venetian Senate which, in 1483, had so strongly urged the half-forgotten rights of Orleans. But we, familiar with those silent manuscripts, are not surprised to find that no sooner had the King gone south than Venice and Florence began to interfere with Orleans. The very day the King left Asti,* a secret messenger from Piero de' Medici entered the city. His errand was to Orleans. In their desire to stop the progress of Charles VIII., and in their hatred of Lodovico who had invoked the stranger, the Italian princes proposed to offer Milan to the French in place of Naples. Orleans himself suggested, unknown to his chivalrous young cousin, that the King would be satisfied if Ferdinand would pay him homage for Naples, and, besides a war indemnity, a yearly pension such as the kings of France pay to England. For himself, and as a just fine on Lodovico, he intimated that the Duchy of Milan might be divided between the houses of Orleans and Sforza. But as time went on, and the arms of France were everywhere successful, he grew bolder in his demands, and "Milan for the heir of the Visconti" was his cry.

But Charles, ignorant of the intrigues of Orleans

* The messenger left Florence Oct. 3, 1494. See for further details of these schemes the first vol. of Desjardins' "Nég. dip. dans la Toscane."

and Florence, of Venice and of Sforza (who also for his private ends wished the King to keep this side the Apennines), crossed the southern range as he had crossed the Alps, and by the new year he was in Rome. Then, afraid of the French success, the Italians began to draw back from their conspiracy with Orleans. They had wished the French to take Milan instead of Naples, but Milan as well as Naples was too much.

VIII.

When the French had entered Italy, Orleans had had no legal rival to his claim, unless, indeed, the Emperor be called his rival. To the people of Lombardy, oppressed by taxes, hating their tyrant, he appeared as the rightful heir, the last of the Visconti. Round the history of a past not yet remote there had grown a mist through which all things appeared of vague, heroic, and mysterious proportions, of which the King Arthur, the legendary glory, was the first duke—"Saint Giangaleazzo," as one of the brothers of Pavia called him in the presence of Commines. "This saint of yours," cried the amused historian, "was a great and wicked, though most honourable, tyrant." "That may be," said the brother; "we call him saint because he did good to our order."

This was also the feeling of the Milanese, for whom Giangaleazzo had invented security and peace, for whom he had conquered immense possessions. They forgot his sins, his crimes, and the first duke became the hero of the place. To be the last descendant of

this man seemed in itself a claim to inherit his possessions, to sit in his place, to expel the usurper. While this was their feeling, in October the usurper died.

Giangaleazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan, a youth of five-and-twenty, kept in prison by his uncle, the Regent Lodovico, died no less suspiciously than the little princes in the Tower. He left behind him a son four years old, his legitimate successor. But, with ominous prevision, a year before this time, Lodovico the regent had negotiated with the Emperor to obtain the reversion of the duchy. He had admitted that his father, his brother, his nephew were no more than illegal usurpers: moreover they had prejudiced the rights of the empire by receiving their titles only from the people. Thus the infant son of Giangaleazzo was the son, not merely of a usurper, but of a man who had forfeited whatever rights he originally had. Conceding this, Lodovico besought the Emperor, of his free grace and bounty, to bestow the duchy on himself and his descendants, even as once before an emperor had bestowed Milan upon a man who had no legal claim—namely, on Giangaleazzo Visconti. Maximilian consented, and on Sept. 5, 1494, the Imperial letters of promise * were de-

* The copy is to be found in Corio, 457–59. I do not know where to find the original document, but MSS. copies, evidently from the Archives of Pavia, are to be found among the British Museum documents, Additional MSS., 30, 675. Giovio mentions a report that after the death of Francesco Sforza II., Count Massimiliano Sforza found the deed and restored it to the Emperor. Lodovico il Moro ever insisted that he received Milan, not by succession, but direct from the Emperor. He called himself the fourth, and not the seventh, duke.

spatched from Antwerp, letters for which the Regent paid the sum of 100,000 ducats.

This document, kept in the deepest privacy, can have arrived in Milan but a few days before Giangaleazzo died. Every one believed that the young man had died of poison. It was a piteous thing. But the son of the murdered man was only four years old; and the French were in Lombardy—the guests of Lodovico. "To be short," says Commines, "Lodovico had himself declared Duke of Milan, and that, as I think, was his only end in bringing us across the mountains." Terrorised by the presence of the French, the people hailed the Regent as their duke, "and crying *Duca! Duca!*" (wrote Corio), "and having robed him in the ducal mantle, they set him on horseback, and he rode to the temple, the men of his faction proclaiming him the while, and they set the joy-bells ringing, while all this time the dead body of Giangaleazzo was lying still unburied in the great cathedral."

Conscious of the secret diploma in his pocket, Lodovico could enjoy the pleasure of this ceremony with a feeling of security. Yet his crown did not sit quite smoothly on his brows. Orleans in Asti was assuming an intolerable air of patronage. And behind that thin row of partisans shouting with their hired voices, "*Duca! Duca!*" there was a sullen, silent crowd. Those, and the rest of Italy, believed that Lodovico had poisoned the father in order to usurp the inheritance of the child, Francesco. Of the three pretenders, by far the most popular was the unconscious infant, who bore so quaintly in his mother's

arms the beloved and redoubtable name of his grandfather, the great condottiere. "Nearly all the Milanese," wrote Commines, "would have revolted to the King had he only followed Trivulzio's advice and set up the arms of the child-duke." But Charles refused to injure the claims of his cousin of Orleans.

Meanwhile the relations between the French and Lodovico were growing difficult and strained. The presence of Orleans in Asti, the miraculous success of Charles, inspired the Duke of Milan with the bitterest regret that ever he had called his allies across the mountains. He had used them as a weapon, and now their use had passed. When, on Feb. 27, 1495, he heard the news that the French had entered Naples, he simulated every sign of joy. But while the bells were still ringing in the steeples, he drew aside the Venetian envoy. "I have had bad news," he whispered. "Naples is lost. Let us form a league against the common enemy."

This was in the end of February. During the next month there was much secret business in the diplomatic world. Ever since the entry of the French into Rome the great powers had looked unkindly on the triumph of Charles VIII. The Emperor beheld with dismay the alliance of Ghibelline Milan and the Ghibelline Colonna with the King of France. The Pope believed with reason that France, the Colonna, and the Savelli might depose a pontiff so unpopular as Alexander VI. Ferdinand and Isabella declared that the intention of Charles was nothing less than to make himself the king of Italy and then proceed to conquer Spain. So likely did it seem that this un-

gainly, limping, ill-instructed youth might justify the name he had assumed—*Carolus Octavus, Secundus Magnus.*

At Venice in the dead of the night the secret council used to meet. There, with the Venetian Senate, the ambassadors of Germany, Castile and Arragon, and Milan conferred together. They were negotiating a league to expel the French from Italy. On March 31st, while Charles was still shut in the Neapolitan trap, the quintuple alliance was proclaimed. The last name among the allies was the name of the man who had called Charles into Italy, now given for the first time among his equals his new dignity of Duke of Milan. Lodovico hastened to legalize this official recognition. In May the Imperial privilege, formally promised in the preceding autumn, arrived at Milan. In presence of the Imperial envoys the privilege was read aloud at Lodovico's solemn coronation.

IX.

Lodovico had sprung a disagreeable surprise upon the Duke of Orleans, for his title, derived directly from Maximilian, was now as good as that of Giangaleazzo Visconti himself. To conquer Milan by arms, to force the Emperor into revoking the privilege of 1495, to induce him to grant a new one confirming the Visconti succession—this was the only course that remained to Orleans.

Secret as the Council had been at Venice, it had not escaped the notice of Commines, who wrote in March to Orleans bidding him look to the walls of

Asti, and sent a messenger to Bourbon in France bidding him despatch a reinforcement to the scanty force of Orleans. The young Duke at Asti was not sorry to receive the message. He had now been six months in Lombardy; he had done nothing; and he was eager to come to battle with Lodovico. To all the French, by this time, Il Moro appeared a traitor and a secret poisoner. To Louis of Orleans he appeared all this and also the usurper of his inheritance.

Great were the pomp and beauty of Milan in the year 1495, humbled as yet by no centuries of foreign servitude, ruined by no battles and untouched by time. Wonderful in the fresh whiteness of its stately cathedral; delicate with the unblurred beauty of the new frescoes by Lionardo; rich with statuary, broken now and lost for ever; gay with the clear fine moulding of its rose-red palaces, Milan in the rich plain was a fountain of wealth to its possessor. When Orleans beheld this earthly paradise of the Renaissance, his claim to Milan, which had been at first but a shadowy pretension, took certainty and substance in his mind. And as the attention of the young man was drawn to his Visconti ancestors, and to the marriage of his grandfather with the daughter of the Duke of Milan, he and his counsellors began to reconstruct the half-forgotten title that he had to Milan.

No one was very clear as to the point. The ducal secretaries found themselves compelled to suppose, to invent. Nicole Gilles, the chief of them, declared that Filippo Maria Visconti had married Madame

Bonne, daughter of King John of France (a lady who had she existed, would have been a good forty years older than her husband), by whom he had two girls, Valentine, who married the Duke of Orleans, and Bonne, who married the lord of Montauban in Brittany. Besides these he had a bastard child, Bianca Maria, the wife of Sforza.

This is perhaps the clearest of these singular genealogies *pour rire*. Louis was glad to escape from their confusion and bewilderment to the plain issues of the field of battle. There seemed a good chance for him. Lodovico was so hated by his subjects * that they would welcome almost any change. Almost at the same moment that Piacenza offered herself to King Charles if he would undertake to support the child Francesco, the cities of Milan, Pavia, and Novara were secretly practising with Orleans, and Commines declares he would have been received in Milan with greater rejoicings than in his town of Blois.

On April 17th Lodovico il Moro insolently summoned Orleans to quit Asti and cross the Alps again with all his men. Thanks to the warning of Commines, Orleans already had fortified the town.

"This place," he replied,† "and its dependent castles are a part of my inheritance, and to put them in other hands, and to go away and leave my own

* "Era molto odiato dai popoli a cagione dei denari."—"Bello Gallico," i. p. 176.

† For this letter, and for the letters of Orleans to Bourbon, quoted from the Library of St. Petersburg, *vide* vol. ii. of Cherrier's "Histoire de Charles VIII.," p. 184, *et seq.*

possessions, is a thing that I never meant to do. Tell your master," he added to the messenger, "that he will find me ready for combat, either waiting for him here or going forth to meet him on the field of battle. I have received a commission from the King, and it is my intention to fulfil it."

Unfortunately, the real commission that Orleans had received from his cousin was to keep quiet and on no account to break the peace (for the league was defensive, and did not menace the royal troops if they retired without offence) until Charles and his diminished army had arrived at Asti. They would be in imminent peril if any rash act of Orleans should let loose upon them, amid the bewildering passes of the mountains, the eager concourse of their vigilant enemies. But Orleans did not remember this. He was burning for personal conflict with his rival, indignant at his treachery, and persuaded that he could easily secure the whole of Lombardy to France. Thrice in April he wrote to Bourbon entreating succour. "Only send me the reinforcements at once, and I think I shall do the King a service that men will talk of many a year." The forces came; and Orleans saw himself the master of 5,000 foot, 100 archers, 1,300 men-at arms or thereabouts, and two fine pieces of artillery.* He was aware that Lodovico was so out-at-elbows that he could not pay his army. He knew the discontent of Lombardy. He felt himself so much older and wiser than the King

* This is the Venetian estimate. Guicciardini says, 300 lances, 3,000 Swiss, and 3,000 Gascons.

that he found it hard to obey his commands. His secret practice with the nobles of the Lombard cities informed him that all was ripe for a sudden stroke. On the last night of May, in the safety of the dark, twenty men-at-arms under Jean de Louvain rode out from Asti across the Lombard plain, until at day-break on June 1st they reached the gate of San Stefano at Novara. The gate was opened to them by the factors of the Opicini, two nobles of the place; the citizens ran out to meet the French; the handful of Sforzesco troops within the town barred themselves in the citadel. By June 13th, Orleans, with the flower of his army, occupied Novara.

No sooner was he there than, first Pavia, then Milan, offered to receive him. He ought to have gone at once, before the armies of his enemies could encircle him in Novara. But his whole soul was invaded by a deep distrust of the Italians. It seemed safer to temporise until the royal troops came up. Long before these could possibly arrive, on June 22nd, the Venetians protected Milan with 1,000 Grecian stradiots, 2,000 foot, 1,000 cuirassiers.* It was now impossible to take Milan, which a little boldness might easily have gained. It was impossible even to evacuate Novara. And when, after many difficulties heroically overcome, the little army of Charles arrived in Asti on July 27th, sorely in need of rest and of refreshment, a new and arduous task awaited it; for Orleans and his soldiers were perishing of hunger in besieged Novara.

* This is the Venetian estimate. For the figures of Giovio and Corio, see Cherrier, ii. 197.

X.

Commines has set dramatically before us the division between the army and the council of the King. He himself warmly espoused the cause of the army, which frankly declared a battle impossible against such overwhelming odds: unless reinforcements arrived from Switzerland, Orleans must be released by composition from Novara. But the council insisted on an immediate engagement. The soldiers commonly said that Orleans had promised Briçonnet an income of 10,000 crowns for his son, if Milan should still be gained and the siege of Novara raised. The Swiss did not come; the army was too small. In September there began to be a serious talk of peace. On the 26th of that month, Orleans and his army were released by composition from Novara. Over 2,000 of them had died of hunger, and many fell by the roadside from sheer weakness and died there as they lay. (Commines found fifty of them dying in a garden, and saved their lives by a timely mess of pottage.) Most of those who lived to reach the camp perished of the dangerous abundance. More than three hundred of their wasted corpses were cast upon the dunghills of Vercelli.

This was a heavy price to pay for one man's disobedient ambition. All the harder did it seem to buy nothing with so great expense. There were many who were still unwilling for peace. Orleans had endeared himself to his troops by his conduct during the hunger of Novara, where he had fared and fasted like any common man-at-arms, setting aside

the ducal mess for the use of the sick in hospital. His mess-fellows were willing still to die for him. By an ironic turn of fate, on the very day on which the army evacuated Novara, 20,000 Swiss came to the relief of the king. With such a reinforcement as this, cried Orleans, Ligny, D'Amboise and their men, Charles might not only conquer Milan, but make himself master of the whole of Italy. But the negotiations for peace already were begun; Novara was lost; the French soldiers were few and much enfeebled; and it was rumoured that the Swiss meant no less than to capture King Charles with all his nobles, carry them off into the impregnable fastness of the Alps, and then exact a fabulous ransom for their liberty.

The King thought it best to dismiss at once these dangerous allies, and take his homesick soldiers back to France. On Oct. 10th peace was concluded. The king promised—on condition that Lodovico Sforza renounced all claim to Asti, made no obstacle to the relief of the French in Naples, and paid to Orleans a war indemnity of 50,000 ducats—not to sustain his cousin's right to Milan. Orleans was enraged and disappointed. In secret he negotiated for the support of the Swiss captains, and with these and with 800 of his men-at-arms he meant to march from Vercelli upon Milan. But the night before he was to leave, when all was ready, suddenly he demanded the consent of the King. Charles refused to sanction this breach of the peace, and bade his cousin join the army in marching back to France. By Nov. 7th Orleans, none the richer for his endeavours, was with the King at Lyons.

A little more than a year after this the King would gladly have sent his cousin of Orleans to conquer Milan: it was the Duke who made excuses and would not go. For soon after the French returned to France, the Dauphin died. Charles, who had inherited that terrible distrust of his own children from which he had suffered in his father, did not greatly mourn, or so at least Commines assures us. But if the quickness of a little child of three—his own son—had given him concern, much more did he dread his new heir, the Duke of Orleans. The queen, bewailing the loss of her child, had fallen into a lamentable melancholy, and Charles, with an absurd idea of cheering the poor mother, ordered a masque of gentlemen to dance before her. Orleans was among them, and he danced to such purpose, with such lightness of heart and heel, such buoyancy and gladness, that the sorrowing queen was seriously offended; and Charles himself determined, if possible, to send his cheerful heir a little further from the throne.

An opportunity soon offered. Florence, faithful against all the world to France, sent to the King at Amboise, asking him to come and uproot the Sforza out of Milan. She offered to furnish 800 men-at-arms and 5,000 footmen at her own cost. The cardinal of St. Peter in Vinculis, the Orsini, Bentivoglio of Bologna, Este of Ferrara, Gonzaga of Mantua, all had promised to hire their forces to the King. Genoa was to be conquered by Trivulzio while Orleans marched on Milan. The plan of campaign was settled, the troops were all drawn up, Trivulzio had already entered Italy with 6,000 infantry and

800 men-at-arms, when, on the very night of his departure, Orleans suddenly abandoned his post. On his own private quarrel, he declared, he could not and he would not go; as the King's lieutenant, and at his express command, he was ready to depart —not otherwise. "I would never force him to the wars against his will," exclaimed Charles, and, though for many days the Florentine ambassadors besought him to exercise the authority of the throne, he refused to interfere with Orleans. "Thus was the voyage dashed," relates Commines, "spite of great charges and all our friends in a readiness. And this was done to the King's great grief, for Milan being once won, Naples would have yielded of itself."

What, then, had happened to change the mind of Orleans — Orleans, disobedient at Novara, and disobedient again to-day for so opposite a reason? "He shunned this enterprise," continues our historian, "because he saw the King ill-disposed of his body, whose heir he should be if he died." "He would not go," relates Guicciardini, "for he saw that the King was ill, and to himself belonged the succession of the crown."

Just a year after this, on the morning of Palm Sunday (April 8, 1498), Louis of Orleans, fallen into a sort of undetermined half-disgrace, was standing at a window in his house at Blois, when he saw in the street some soldiers of the royal guard, running quickly. "God save the King!" they cried; "Vive le roi Louis XII.!" This was the first King Louis heard of the sudden death of his cousin. The day before, Charles VIII. had fallen down, suddenly stricken to

death, as he and his wife were watching a game of tennis from the gallery at Amboise.

XI.

The French claimant to Milan was now the King of France. From this moment the pretensions of Orleans became a factor in European history. The plans of the first Duke of Milan went so grievously astray, that, instead of France and Germany each holding the other in check, for half a century their armies occupied the soil of Lombardy, nor, when they withdrew, was the land left at peace, but, baffled and paralyzed, the helpless prey of Spain.

This Iliad is too important to be contained within the slender limits of an essay. We can but briefly indicate the events which developed and then extinguished the right of the French to Milan. Conquered in 1499, by Louis XII. of France, Lombardy remained for five and twenty years an intermittent province of that kingdom, continually revolting, continually reconquered. During this time several privileges and investitures, extracted from the Emperor, confirmed the victories of France, and annulled the claims of Lodovico Sforza. These investitures are worthy of at least our brief consideration, since, from the moment of their bestowal, the French claim to Milan, already emphasised by the rights of heredity, testamentary bequest, and contract, received the final sanction of the feudal law.

The first of these Imperial investitures was bestowed on King Louis XII. by the hand of Maximilian on

April 7, 1505.* It secured the Duchy of Milan (*non obstante priore investitura illustri Ludovico Sfortia prius exhibita*) to the King of France and to his sons; or, in default of males, to his daughter Claude. At this time, through the influence of Queen Anne, Claude was most unnaturally betrothed to the permanent enemy of her country, the future Charles V., and in this document he is mentioned as her husband and co-heir—a fact he did not allow to slip. But fortunately the heiress of Brittany, Orleans, and Milan, was not allowed to marry the great rival of France. On June 14, 1509, a second investiture confirmed the inheritance of Claude, and associated with her therein her future husband, Francis of Angoulême, her cousin, equally with herself the offspring of Valentine and Orleans.† This Imperial document explicitly admits the right of feminine succession to a Lombard fief,‡ for Claude, it affirms, is the heiress to Milan through her father, the grandson of Madame Valentine. But it says nothing of the descent of Francis of Angoulême, although it provides that if Claude should die in childhood, and the King have no other children born to take her place, then Francis of Angoulême shall be recognized as in his own right Duke of Milan because he is the heir of the King of France.

* Luenig, sectio ii. classis i. : "De Ducato Mediolanesi," xliv.

† See in Luenig, June 14, 1509, No. xlv., and also, with some unimportant variations of text, Bib. Nat. Paris, MS. 2950, Ancien Fonds Français.

‡ *Præfatus rex ex ducibus Mediolani originem trahit, medio illustris quondam dominæ Valentinæ aviæ suæ, filiæ quondam illustris Johannis Galeatii Mediolani ducis.*

These are the rights of Francis I. to Milan, rights absolute and impregnable. But it was only by continual conquest that the French could keep their hold upon the Milanese. For the tendencies of ages go to show us that there is a natural right more potent than the claims of blood, succession, testament, adoption, or investiture. The French dukes of Milan were, in their own dominions, foreigners. And, as the wise Commines foresaw—

"There is no great seniorie but in the end the dominion thereof remaineth to the natural countrymen. And this appeareth by the realm of France, a great part whereof the Englishmen possessed the space of four hundred years, and yet now hold they nothing therein but Calais and two little castles, the defence whereof costeth them yearly a great sum of money. And the self-same appeareth also by the realm of Naples and the Isle of Sicily, and the other provinces possessed by the French, where now is no memorial of their being there, save only their ancestors' graves."

It was the fatal battle of Pavia which really lost her Italian dependencies to France. The treaty of Madrid, extorted by compulsion, which proved so powerless to restore to the Emperor Burgundy (already become an integral part of France), resigned to him for ever the dominions of the French in Italy; not, however, without a struggle. No sooner was Francis released from Madrid than he declared that extorted contract void. He despatched protest after

protest * to all the courts in Europe: but what availed to retain his hold on Cognac, proved vain to regain him the Milanese.

Immediately after the battle of Pavia, Charles V. had invested Francesco Sforza II., the son of Il Moro, with the duchy of his fathers. But what should happen on the death of Francesco Sforza, a childless man? Foreseeing this event, the hopes of the king of France were not extinguished; and the ten years between 1530 and 1540 are filled with the various endeavours, menaces, persuasions, by which he strove to obtain from the emperor the Duchy of Milan for the second son of France. Since it was evidently impossible to induce Charles V. to let Milan be an adjunct to the French Crown, the ambition of the king persevered upon a lower level, and a French Duke of Milan became the sum of his desires. At two different moments the realization of this scheme appeared possible. In 1535, after the death of Francesco Sforza II., negotiations were set on foot to obtain the Milanese for Orleans. A document still existing in the National Library at Paris † proves how lively and how sanguine at this moment was the hope of Francis I. to recover Milan. The king offered a promise never to unite this duchy to the Crown of France, and declared himself ready to expend an immense sum on its investiture. But the Venetians,‡

* See for example "Protestations de François 1er," Bib. Nat. MS. 2846.

† Bib. Nat. MS. 2846, No. 57: *Instruction baillée au Seigneur d'Espercieu après la mort du duc de Milan, Sforce, &c.*

‡ Ibid.: *Les Vénitiens ont practiqué bien avant cette mattière et laissent, ce semble, le dict Sieur de Granvelle*

aware of the danger to themselves which a great French state must create in Italy, temporized and manœuvred so well that the matter came to nothing; for Charles V. was in a humour to credit their assertions, that any time was better than time present. The affairs of Italy were dull and dead to him. All his energies were fixed upon the idea of the crusade against Algiers. It was proposed that Orleans should join him in this enterprize,* and that, hand to hand in this holy fight, emperor and prince might consent to forget the bitter memory of bygone days. But in 1536 the eldest son of Francis died, and Orleans became the Dauphin of France. The schemes, the policy which during several years had endeavoured to secure for the husband of Catherine de' Medici an Italian principality, collapsed before that unexpected stroke of fate. Orleans was not to be the head of an Italian kingdom reaching from the Alps to Rome, and in 1540 Charles V. invested his own son, Philip of Spain, with the Duchy of Milan. Yet France could not acquiesce in this alienation of her transalpine inheritance, and in 1544 the disastrous treaty of Crépy provided that, in two years from that date, either Milan or the Netherlands should be bestowed upon the third son of Francis. But before the time of the engagement had expired, Prince Charles was dead, and Milan fast in the grasp of the Spaniards.

entendre qu'ils parlent autrement que le roy, par aventure, ne pense; l'ambassadeur parle assez publiquement de diviser le dict estat en plusieurs pièces.

* Ibid.

The Malatestas of Rimini.

NOTES AND DETAILS.

It is a centre for many memories, this little town of Rimini, set in the plain by the Adriatic. Here ruled and ravaged the Mastin Vecchio of Dante. The eyes of Francesca and her lover remember eternally these yellow sands. Here Parisina left her innocence. Here dwelt Gismondo, prince of traitors. And there are older memories than these. Yet in the city whence Cæsar crossed the Rubicon, whence Augustus began the great Flaminian Way, we remember, not Cæsar or Augustus, but that strange, brave, cruel, perfidious race of petty despots, whose encroaching personality and whose genius for architecture has left an enduring trace on the cities of Romagna.

Pesaro, Fano, Cesena, Verruchio, and many another town owned the unquiet sway of these Malatestas, and found them a perverse and twisted race, shot with opposite qualities. They were a race of wrongheads, as their surname tells us. Criminal often and yet not merely vicious, having some great thought in them mostly, some fine intention still manifest through the error of their lives, many of

their vices were due to circumstance. A dominant, courageous race of princelings, mostly illegitimate, never sure of their tenure, it was only by unquestioned autocracy and a never-relaxed grasp that they could secure their state from inner and outer ravage. Their hand was against every man, and every man's against them. Not only the Pope anxious to enlarge his Venetian frontier, and Venice eager for another province on the Adriatic seaboard; not only the Duke of Urbino, the hereditary foe, perched like an eagle on the hills above, watching the unguarded moment to pounce upon his prey: not only these, and Sforza and Arragon, but every brother or cousin of the house, from his petty stronghold in the plain, was ready to snatch from the lord of Rimini, his dearly held supremacy.

Such absolute power in the present, with such uncertain future, is above all things dangerous to heady natures. The Malatestas grew mad sometimes with their unrestrained indulgence, mad with cruelty and wild debauch; but we repeat they were not merely vicious. They were strong, cunning, brave unto death, ambitious; they knew how to make their subjects love them; they left their little seaside village a monument of art, and made their few miles of plain a power in Italy.

In 1427 there was no lawful heir to this long-enriched possession. Carlo Malatesta, twice married, lived in childish state at Rimini: Pandolfo of Fano, dying in 1427, left no heir from his three brides; but, in bequeathing to his brother Carlo his estate of Fano, he also sent to him three natural children, still young

boys, for whom both uncle and father had in vain attempted to obtain a bull of legitimation. Powerful enemies stood in their path. By excluding these children, Malatesta of Pesaro on the one hand, and Frederic of Urbino on the other, hoped to succeed to Rimini and Fano; and for long they persuaded the Pope to their own interests. But Carlo Malatesta was not easily thwarted.

This Carlo was in many ways the most honourable of his race; a righteous, moral, pious soldier and captain, much such another as those who saved England under Cromwell. It is recorded of him that, entering Mantua in triumph on the morning of Virgil's birthday, he found the great irregular square there full of revellers, dancing and singing and crowning with wreaths of flowers the statue of the poet. Whereat, incensed at such worship paid to a vain heathen idol, he led up his soldiers to the pedestal and bade them throw the statue into the Mincio; which being done, or reported to be done, such a chorus of blame and indignation rose throughout the humanistic Hellenist Italy of that day as not one of the orgies, crimes, brutalities, and lusts of Carlo's kinsmen had ever wakened. All this gave little discomfiture to Carlo, himself in his way a connoisseur of art and letters, and the first patron of the young Ghiberti, whom he employed to decorate the Gattolo at Rimini. Seldom indeed was Rimini so enviable as during the long and prosperous reign of Carlo. But in 1429 Carlo died.

Just before his death he had procured the legitimation of his nephews. He was succeeded by Galeotto,

the eldest, a lad of seventeen, who found a heavy load in the much-battered helmet and sheath left empty for him. Many hungry eyes adverse to him were fixed already on that jacent helm; Frederic of Urbino and the faithless cousin of Pesaro were ranked close beneath the city gates; the more ready to snatch his inheritance because Eugene IV., the newly elected Pope, discussed with much dislike and doubt the legitimation granted to Carlo by his predecessor. The Pope, represented by Urbino, claimed Rimini as devolving to the See; Sforza and Pesaro, each for himself, were ready to contest it with him. What chance against such tremendous odds had Galeotto, seventeen years old, weak in health, illegitimate, with no great ally to enforce his claims?

A more inadequate champion the mind cannot imagine. No David eager to fight the giant, this Galeotto Malatesta, but a wan, emaciated youth, half-crazed, half-saint. In the middle of the panic, with the horror of a triple sack maddening the miserable Riminese, this prince left the city to dwell in the monastery of Arcangelo, outside the gates. There he passed his days serene, scathless in the midst of peril; neither for himself nor his kingdom taking any thought.

So strange this spectacle, so awful, that the very enemies of Rimini stopped in their onslaught amazed. The lion, it is said, will not attack a sleeping prey. Eugene, the Pope (in his temporal character the deadly foe of Rimini), wrote to its lord, bidding him remember the imperative duties of his position. The letter reached that "magnificent man and potent

prince" in the monastery at Arcangelo, where clad in the coarse robes of a Franciscan friar, he led an ascetic, starved, and mutilated life. What was the magnificence of earth him? So harsh were his self-inflicted penances that the wounds on his body never ceased to bleed. What had he to do with rule and governance? The brothers of the monastery, and the young virgin wife who drooped and paled at his side, were all of mankind he knew or saw; and he himself the chief of sinners. Neither Pope nor armies could force him back to earth. Thus friends and foes alike failed to touch him; there was no pity in the heart of Galeotto the Saint.

Or rather—common, yet tragical transmutation of the Middle Ages—his pity took a retrospective turn; dead and dry to the present woes it might relieve, it rushed back in a mighty impotent tide to the foot of that sacred and awful Cross, whose divine tragedy was the continual spectacle of the saintly life. Pity for the dead Christ—throbbing, yearning, helpless, and indignant pity for the agonized Saviour—this surely lay at the bottom of all crusades, tortures, persecutions, inquisitions of the Middle Ages. Living ever with the crucifix in sight, dwelling ever and solely in presence of that dread expiation—such fanatics as Galeotto forgot the example of the life of Christ in the terror and pity of Golgotha. Vengeance on the enemies of God! vengeance on the traitors who still stab and crucify the ever newly sacrificed God and Victim! so ran the tenor of mediæval piety. And the contagion of this fanatic sentiment slaughtered the armies of the East, tossed Albigensian babies on

to lance-points, and roasted before a ribald soldiery the pious Vaudois women; the martyrs of Saint Bartholomew and the martyrs of Smithfield were hewn and burned by the strength of it; and from its armoury the Inquisition drew its deadliest weapons.

Thus Galeotto, unmoved by the misery of the people who, owing allegiance to him, died, starved, and sorrowed for his sake, was nevertheless, not without his private schemes of sanctity and militant devotion. High thoughts were born in that narrow mind, as in the intervals of penance and office the lord of Rimini paced the monastery garden. Monk as he was by life and feeling, he too had his ambition; he too had his work to fulfil. And here solved that the Jews should be cast out from Rimini.

Months went on, and the details of his scheme matured in the brain of the cloistered prince; but, meanwhile, his foes pressed closer and closer round him, and there was no leader to lead the few forlorn troops out to battle; yet ruin stared upon the city nearer every day, and now or never must the decisive step be taken. Still Galeotto prayed and dreamed in his cell at Arcangelo. But an unsuspected deliverer was in Rimini. One autumn night in 1430, secret to most of the citizens, a desperate sally was made from the gates of the town. A short, brisk uncertain conflict in the terrifying darkness, and the surprised armies were driven back, ignorant of the small number of their assailants. And as in the dawn, the conqueror led his troops back inside the gates, flushed and triumphant, the people crowded out into the streets to look at him and bless him, crying that the

great days of Carlo and of Verruchio had returned; and behold this saviour of the city was the brother and heir of Galeotto—was the boy Sigismond, or Gismondo, Malatesta, not yet thirteen years old!

Whether the Pope and the oncoming armies perceived that at last they had a substantive enemy to deal with, or whether touched with compassion by so much youthful daring, they concluded a peace with Rimini only a few days after the successful sally. A ruinous peace indeed; forfeiting many broad lands and territories in return for the acknowledgment of the true right to Rimini, Fano, and Cesena of these legitimized Malatestas. But the people were thankful for any peace, and Galeotto easily yielded, seeing here the needed opportunity to prove his piety. He signed the treaty on consideration that the Holy Father would authorize him to expel the Jews from Rimini.

It was a cruel step. This plain by the Adriatic had long been a refuge to the outcast nation, who brought thither their genius for wealth, their industry, and their abundance. It was represented to Galeotto that the fortunes of Rimini were bound up with the presence of these patient and long-enduring exiles. They had given no cause for just offence; they had, indeed, offered to defray the heavy amnesty exacted by the Pope; and to banish them would yet further enfeeble the war-shattered city. The Pope, indeed, perceived these thing; but neither gratitude, policy, nor compassion, weighed with the fanatic Galeotto. "Better starve," thought he, "than favour the enemies of Christ." So the law went forth, and when the winter made doubly dreary the wide sandy war-

ravaged plains, a melancholy train of miserable outcasts set out from the city they had enriched; banished and ruined for no fault of their own, with no home before them, and leaving behind them, uprooted and strengthless as it seemed, the fortunes of the little town.

So the edict ran, and many went out in exile scarcely was the exodus completed when Galeotto died. His fasts and scourgings, his long-continued vigils had worn out his life at twenty years of age. No hermit of the Thebaid had lived more sparsely or hardly than this prince of the pagan renaissance. He was borne to his grave in the monastery churchyard as simply as any other brother; four monks of the order bore his bier, holding flaming torches. They laid him to rest the poor half-mad, self-absorbed visionary. And all the people mourned him, forgiving his injuries because he was a saint; and also, it may be, for some endearing quality in his thwarted nature which does not reach us across the gulf of years. For his virgin widow Margaret of Este loved him and mourned him through all the days of her long life, never marrying again, and praying on her deathbed to be buried at his feet; and the city was proud of Galeotto the Saint. Nevertheless, life appeared more possible now that he was dead.

Galeotto was scarcely buried when new troubles burst upon the city. Urbino and Pesaro laid siege to Lungarino, one of the fiefs of the Riminese. Grief and fear again awoke in the harassed and impoverished town; but in this trouble Sigismond saw his opportunity. He had chafed and fumed and

wasted under the regency of the two widows, his sister-in-law and his aunt. He, a conqueror at thirteen, was surely at fifteen able to rule a city. A daring scheme presented itself to the impatient boy; a scheme which, chance what might, would he knew but increase his favour with the people, however the Ladies-Regent might bewail it. He escaped in disguise from Rimini, and having given notice to his old adherents, collected them outside the walls, and gaining new battalions as he marched towards Lungarino, won a tremendous victory there—a victory which utterly routed Urbino and Pesaro, and proved Sigismond Malatesta one of the most valiant champions in Italy.

After this there could be no question of petticoat-government. At home and abroad this lad of fifteen had established his right both to govern and to combat. In this same year (1432) he reconciled Rimini with the Pope, and concluded an alliance with Venice. In his new friendship with the great sea-city he engaged himself to the daughter of Carmagnola, receiving a portion of the dowry in advance. But quickly on this betrothal followed the disgrace and execution of Carmagnola, and it is characteristic of Gismondo (no less perfidious than brave, grasping than lavish), that, refusing to ally himself with a traitor's daughter, he equally refused to restore her dowry.

A better-omened betrothal, as it seemed, followed this next year, when Sigismond engaged himself to Ginevra, the sister of Margaret, his brother's widow, and daughter of his friend and ally the powerful Mar-

quis of Este. There was high festival both at the betrothal and the marriage; Sigismund the Emperor stayed the same year in the town; it was an occasion of much pageantry. New and better days seemed dawning on Rimini; and when the Pope gave the seventeen-year-old Gismondo the command of the troops of the Church, and restored some of his confiscated territory, it was evident that good fortune was secure.

Gismondo knew how to be generous and prudent. Before departing on his campaign he bestowed the city and lands of Cesena on his brother Domenico, premising that, in any imminent battle where both were concerned, Domenico should range himself with the powers opposed to Gismondo, so that in any case fortune should not desert the Malatestas. A prudent, balanced tactic, well worthy of those slow-moving Condottiere battles, when war was as much a game as chess, and to keep the rules of the game as important as to win. Leaving his city, therefore, with a beneficed protector close at hand, Gismondo set out on his career as a soldier of fortune.

For three years he fought almost continously, gaining great glory for himself in the cause of the Church, besides in his own cause opposing the Duke of Urbino. And in 1438, having at last the leisure to sit at home for a while in peace, he found a new labour ready to his hand. Built for a palace rather than as a fort, the Gattolo of the Malatestas offered them little security in case of war. Gismondo, no less active as military engineer than as captain or art-patron, determined to have it down and build in its

stead a Rocca from his own design, to rank among the strongest in Italy. Calling to his aid Roberto Valturio, the great military engineer of Romagna, Sigismond began that famous Rocca of which to-day only a tower remains, mellowed and faded by the sea winds of centuries, grown over with lichen and sprouting wallflowers: only a tower in the sand, disfigured and insulted by the modern prison built against it, and of which it forms a part.

For the Rocca soon outlived its purpose. By some strange want of foresight, some hapless piece of amateurish ignorance, this great pile, the first built in Italy since the invention of artillery, was planned with no regard to the changed conditions of warfare. Not till sixty years after did some wiser engineer invent the system of bastions; so that, for all its strength, the mighty Rocca of Sigismond was to some extent a waste of labour. Yet by the building of it hangs a tale; through it we approach the greatest influence of Gismondo's life; a memory imperishably united with his own.

While the Gattolo, or palace of the Malatestas, was being levelled to make way for the new fortress, Sigismond removed his household to the Palazzo Roelli in the Via Sta. Croce. Besides his servants and his secretary, he brought with him his miserable wife. Constantly outraged by his infidelities, Ginevra d'Este had cause not only for grief, but for fear. One child had died, and Gismondo had no heir by the woman whom he had married to unite his still unstable house with the powerful lords of Ferrara. He chafed at her presence, useless and undesired.

Close to the Palazzo Roelli stood the Palazzo del Cimiero, where Francesco degli Atti, a merchant of noble birth, lived in sufficient state and splendour with his young son and his motherless daughter Isotta.

A strange girl this neighbour of Sigismond's. Not beautiful, according to the busts and medals that record her features—an imperious, resolute, tenacious creature, imposing her personality like a yoke upon all who knew her. Hard-featured, long-necked, and thin, with perhaps in the large eyes burning under the tense raised eyebrows, a certain feverish, eager beauty to excuse the general panegyric of her contemporaries. An expression of patience, of great constancy, and endurance in the long-lipped, close-shut mouth, with the strong lines round it, in the long square of the face, in the beautiful resolute chin. The face expresses character rather than genius; we behold in it far-seeing resolve, and patience. The reputation of great learning remains with Isotta, despite the modern authorities who, on somewhat insufficient evidence, assure us that she could not write. By some means, at all events, by reading and writing, or by learned conversation and lonely thought, this Isotta gained an eminence among the women of her age for learning and talent, for prudence, and the faculty of government.

Fœmina belligera et fortis: thus the chronicle of Rimini describes her. A nature not immoral, but unscrupulous, a woman in whom will, passion, and intellect were strong enough each to balance the other. Isotta gained an influence over the perverse, defiant, passionate Gismondo which raised her to a position

in the state far superior to that of the lawful wife; a position in which the lax morality of her age saw little disgraceful or revolting.

That Isotta felt it there is ample evidence. Taking Battaglini's date (1438) as the true commencement of her relations with Gismondo she must have been young, certainly under twenty, when she took the first fatal all-involving step on that road of dishonour she was so long to tread. Young in age, she was younger probably by circumstance; this silent, sequestered, thoughtful girl, with neither mother nor sister to confide in. Her father raved and stormed, and then forgave her: I think, remembering a certain beseeching, miserable, unfortunate letter of hers written fifteen years later, that she did not forgive herself. Not the public union of her cipher with Gismondo's, not the corps of courtly poetasters occupied in chanting *Isottæ* to her glory, not the medals struck in her honour, nor the eternal monument prepared, could make this stern proud woman forget that she was her lover's mistress only, after all. Nay, would she not silently, bitterly resent in her inmost heart this blazoning of her shame? "Voliatte avere chompasione a mi poveretta, diate vero spozamento piui presto che viui posette—Take pity on me, poor me," she cries; "give me true marriage as quickly as you can. Ah, put an end to this thing, which always keeps me enraged. Sempre me tene arabiatta." So she cries in her flat, soft dialect; and must cry long enough, poor Isotta.

Yet he was in his fashion faithful to her. He always returned to her, trusted her, counted on her

service and her sacrifice. There was none could govern the city so well in his absence, counsel him, give up all for him—jewels, safety, honour itself. And in return he summoned great artists to do her honour, and instituted the elegiac *Isottæ*, strained and fanciful praises, according to the fashion of the time, of which none are so pregnant, so full of meaning as those of this fierce, unfaithful, constant-lover himself. Through the quaint out-dated garb we catch here and there a glimpse of the man's own nature—of his defiant will, his acute and painful sensibility to beauty, his almost sublime self-preoccupation and intensity. We discern that he is a man who ever felt the eyes of posterity upon him, and yet a fierce, passionate, shameful man; suddenly falling into crime, sceptical of punishment, yet inherently superstitious; vibrating through and through with passion, tainted through and through with hereditary perfidy; half mad, yet with a touch of genius and greatness in this chaotic mass of wickedness and fraud.

Suddenly an end came, for the moment, to this rhyme-repentance. A fearful crime stopped for a day or two the verse-making and recitations. On the 8th of September, 1440, the poor ineffectual Ginevra d'Este died, having taken (so the rumour went) her fatal draught of poison from her husband's hands.

Sigismond was now free to marry a wife who would bring him legal heirs; Isotta cannot have doubted that she would be that woman. But Gismondo, the ardent lover and writer of verses, was not of the character to throw away so valuable a chance of

alliance. He possessed Isotta already, and she had no powerful supporters. In 1442 he married Polissena Sforza, the natural daughter of Francesco Sforza, that magnificent soldier of fortune, already on the alert to seize (when death should offer him the chance) his father-in-law's rich Duchy of Milan.

The chance was to come soon enough; but for a year or two after Gismondo's marriage old Visconti lingered on, and Polissena's father held his peace. Meanwhile, war being slack, Gismondo progressed admirably in his work of remodelling Rimini. In 1446 the Rocca was at length complete; and in the same year he began a yet bolder and more splendid undertaking. The old church of San Francesco, a Gothic building of no great beauty, displeased his Hellenicized humanistic culture. To him it represented nothing—that simple Gothic church raised by the monks to God. Gismondo resolved to convert it into a temple, a temple still dedicated nominally to St. Francis, but in reality to become an eternal monument of Sigismondo and Isotta.

Gismondo called to his aid some of the greatest artists of this time: Matteo da Pasti, the medallist, to execute the great marble medallions of himself, to be set up everywhere in the holy place; Ciuffagni for the statutes (a miserable choice), Simone Ferrucci for the bas-reliefs of playing children, Agostino Duccio, that exquisite draughtsman in marble, to carve in low relief the yellow-white plaques with allegorical figures, whose flowing lines of floating and twisted drapery, small well-poised heads, wonderful grace of attitude, and refined exotic type, recall the

late Greek bas-reliefs rather than the solid, somewhat squat forms of Donatello and his school, or the angular delicacy of Mino. Over all these Gismondo set Leon Battista Alberti, a man almost as universal in his attributes as Leonardo himself. Alberti was to be the architect, and assign with Matteo's aid their several parts to each of his co-operators. No easy task, this of Alberti's; for Gismondo—with a flash of the native superstition which shot so strangely athwart his paganism—refused to destroy the consecrated walls of the older building. The architect must build his Hellenic temple on to the framework of a thirteenth-century Gothic church. Fortunately, the form of the early edifice, its wide nave and simple sanctuary not greatly differing from the Roman Basilica, rendered the conversion within the limits of possibility, and Alberti appears to have enjoyed the difficulty of his task. Perhaps he saw in this endeavour to fuse into one splendid whole the opposite characters of Gothic mediævalism and Greek antiquity, the opportunity to immortalize the spirit of his time—and the result was success. It is built, this temple of Rimini, of Roman stones from Classis, antique slabs from Greece, and of the Adriatic clay fused long ago by pious hands. Augustan arches rise without, sheltering the sarcophagi of philosophers, and within, the light from mediæval windows falls on the altar of a Christian saint. A pagan church, with pointed Gothic arches raised on sculptured classic pillars, a splendid anomaly, chiefly original by its combination of opposing elements, it is a type of the Italian Renaissance.

Finding it impossible to turn the Gothic front with its deep porch and rosace to any classical account, Alberti resolved to inclose it in a marble casing, distant at all points by nearly four feet from the original structure. He was now free to plan his façade, singularly simple in design, yet solemn, beautiful, and stately in its plainness. From a breast-high plinth, giving a noble base to the whole structure, start three engaged arches, the central one larger than the others and higher in relief; the span of all three is extremely wide, their proportions being borrowed from the Roman arch of Augustus close at hand. At the corners of the façade and on either side of the central arch stand four fluted columns with florid capitals; rising from the plinth they support a heavy, deep-shadowed cornice. Sculptured votive wreaths, six in all, are hung between the capitals of the columns and the spandrel of the arches. From the deep cornice above rises the pediment, unfinished and irregular, its supporting columns incomplete. Above this again should have sprung a cupola, vaulting the entire church in its wide span; but in its stead a temporary roof still patches the never-finished masterpiece.

In the hollow space between the façade and the old brick fronting is placed the tomb of Sigismond, accessible from the interior. But on the lateral fronts there is no such space, for here the round wide arches are not merely in relief, but detached: and in the recesses great stone sarcophagi are placed, standing on the red-cornered plinth. In these repose the bones of the humanists and philosophers of Gismondo's

court. When the temple was built there was made room for fourteen sarcophagi to stand there to inclose the most honourable ashes in Italy; but the fate of incompletion which has overtaken the temple has not spared this grandiose design. Only seven tombs stand upon the plinth, seven other empty arches keep no illustrious dead.

Passing through the low door under the central arch of the façade we are amazed by the rich and strange impression of the interior—doubly impressive after the severity outside. The nave is furnished with eight side chapels inclosed by a high balustrade; there are four on each side, the two central ones being in double bays, while a considerable wall space divides the first and last on either side from these. The wall between the arches, divided by slender columns, is tinted alternately with pale sea-green and the lightest red; the frieze bears the same tints; across it are swung heavy festoons of yellow-white marble. The sculptured pillars and railings of the chapels are also tinted with like delicate colours. Ferrucci's bas-reliefs of playing children stand out against a ground of palest, unglazed, greenish-blue, and below these the balustrade is simply white, while beneath Agostino's delicate untinted low-reliefs the railing is of the richest deep-red breccia, elaborately sculptured with double-headed elephants. Behind Ciuffagni's rude figures the background is of dull gold, while here and there on all sides a tinge of gold faintly lines and splashes the yellowish marble. On the frieze, on the shields of the putti, over the doorways, on the columns and the tombs, above the very

heads of the saints in their chapels, we find the double cipher of Sigismond and his mistress. The saints themselves are not safe. Isotta wears the robes and wings of St. Michael. Over the chapel balustrades flourishes her rose, and the image of Sigismond is carved upon the pillars. So that from pedestal to cornice the whole great church is one memorial of the passion that defied it.

Many great artists worked to complete the beauty of Sigismond's temple; but until quite lately the name of the sculptor of the most perfect of these panels was undetermined.* M. Yriarte has told us that we owe them to a certain Florentine cutpurse, Agostino di Duccio. The fact is patent. Never having read M. Yriarte's learned and precious volume, I came to Rimini straight from Perugia, straight from Duccio's wonderful façade of San Bernardino. That façade, those figures so admirable in their poise, that sweeping drapery full of intricate line and harmony, those heads, small, and graceful, with the exotic beauty and rapture of expression, had produced on me the strongest, the most durable impression. A few days after, finding in the decorations of two chapels at Rimini the same strange poetic grace, the same exquisite attitude, the same wavy lines, low relief, and classic feeling, I could not but recognize the master. And so, no doubt, has many another chance traveller, such as I, lacking authority without M. Yriarte and his documents—

* I take this occasion of expressing much indebtedness to M. Yriarte's charming and elaborate volume, "Un Condottiere du XV. Siècle, Gismondo Malatesta."

though without documents the fact itself is surely clear. For the existence of two monuments so strikingly original and singularly alike as the San Bernardino of Perugia and the Cappella di San Gaudenzio at Rimini must surely be due to one hand. The very details of the ornament, the characteristic round sweeps of drapery, like a wind-blown scarf; the exceeding lowness of relief, almost as if drawn on the stone; the type of head, with inspired glance and lips frequently apart are all the graces—the mannerisms even—of one master. That master one would, from the strange beauty of expression in these figures, have judged to be a Sienese, were not the authorship of San Bernardino graven across its front: Opus Augustini Florentini Lapicidæ, MCCCCLXI. It is difficult to imagine how a Florentine, a pupil of Donatello's, could acquire that tall and ripely-slender severity of form, that exquisite freedom of hand; nor does he take his style from the school of the Robbias. In its distinguishing characteristics his manner is unlike any of the great Italian masters. By a bold hypothesis we might account for it with satisfaction by supposing that among those many slabs and lids of marble which Gismondo brought from Greece for the building of the temple there may have been some precious fragment of classic bas-relief not overlooked by the keen-eyed cutpurse and sculptor; who thenceforwards proved himself a master among the masters of his day, first at Rimini and later at Perugia.

The subjects of these designs of Duccio's have troubled many generations. In the chapel of the Holy Sacrament, the planets, the twelve signs of the

Zodiac, and a series of animals magnificently treated, form the decoration. In the Chapel of San Gaudenzio, the subjects are the Muses, Virtues, and other allegorical figures. M. Yriarte has proved that this strange assemblage illustrates a long passage in one of Gismondo's poems to Isotta; and it appears likely that Alberti, himself an author, gave the passage to Duccio for a text. Of a series of thirty-six exquisite bas-reliefs it is impossible to give much description here; but I would advise all lovers of Renaissance sculpture to procure, at least, Alinari's photographs of the *Diana*, the *Agriculture*, the *Medicine*, the *Botany*, and the *Poetry* from Rimini, and to compare these with the exquisite designs of a woman catching together at the knees the folds of her wind-blown mantle, from the façade of San Bernardino.

Sigismond compelled haste from the artists who served him. This temple, of which the corner-stone was laid in 1446, was, by his most earnest desire, to be fit for service and consecration in 1450, the great Jubilee year at Rome. And this in fact was done; the dome was not yet planned, and a flat wooden roof crowned the building; the transept was scarce begun; the façade broken off almost at the base of the pediment; but the nave with its bays was finished, a wonder of sculpture and colour. And as it was opened in 1450 so we behold it to-day.

A strange ceremony it must have been, that Jubilee service in the newly-opened temple. The prelates and great dignitaries of the church meet, appalled, in that splendid shrine to Diva Isotta, which a little later the Pope should adduce as absolute and suffi-

cient proof of the paganism of its founder. From door to transept, from pedestal to cornice, no memento of Christ; only everywhere the I.S. of Isotta and her lover mocking the sacred mongram; and the rose of the prince's mistress where there should have been the crown of thorns. Diva Isotta herself would be there in all her glory; she had furnished from her private purse the funds for her chapel of St. Michael, where her likeness filled the robes of the saint, where, shadowed with the blazons of Sigismond and standing on the Malatestan elephants, her sarcophagus stood ready. There, also, must have been the hapless Polissena, condemned to witness this triumph of her rival, condemned to praise the chapel in Isotta's honour, while seeing nowhere in all that splendid church a corner dedicated to herself, nor any memorial of the dead Ginevra.

Hapless Polissena! Even then her husband was treating with the Pope to legitimize his children by Isotta. She had no children. Even before that ominous festival her husband had made the war of succession at Milan against her father. Her claims on him were breaking, one by one. And when the peace was made, and the Pope gave Sigismond, with Sinigaglia, the legitimation of his children, she must have thought bitterly of Ginevra's end. Indeed a few weeks afterwards she too died suddenly, terribly. Not poison this time, the rumour went. Gismondo, they said, had strangled her with a napkin.

None dared accuse him then. He was at the height of his power and formidable triumph—at the summit, the climax, beyond which is no ascent. Yet

even then he had made a deadly enemy, scorned at present, but who knew how to wait. Not Sforza, who seems to have taken the loss of his daughter with strange indifference. It was the perfidy and not the violence of Sigismond that wrought his ruin. Engaged to fight for Arragon in the war of the Milanese succession, he had received in advance a large portion of his pay. Then the Florentines sought to tempt him from his allegiance. With true Tuscan shrewdness they chose for their agent no Medici, no magnificent money-bag or puissant general—but Gianozzo Manetti the Humanist. Him and his rare manuscripts they send into Gismondo's camp; and as the scholar treats with the great captain, he shows him such-and-such a precious Greek fragment, or a perfect copy of Virgil—or the Platonists, pointing without too obvious intention the superior culture of Florence to barbarous Arragon. Gismondo, fascinated, stepped into the snare. The next day he deserted to Florence, refusing, moreover, to restore the immense wage he had drawn from the Duke of Arragon for services never to be rendered. Nor at the time was there any redress for that prince; but the time of vengeance was to come.

Meanwhile, incautious, believing that he could compass heaven and earth between his courage and his perfidy, Sigismond earned yet more of the traitor's wages. Scarcely was the peace of Lodi signed (in 1454), than he hired himself and his troops to the Republic of Siena in their quarrel against the lord of Pittigliano. Again he deserted to the enemy, thinking to make a better bargain with him. The Sienese

sent him his demission, "in terms of great courtesy and haughtiness," but denounced his treachery to all the great powers with which they were allied, including Arragon. He, perceiving in this double proof of treachery, sufficient cause for a quarrel, sent Piccinino, the greatest soldier of fortune of his day, against the wall of Rimini. Yet all was not lost; for Sforza came to the aid of his son-in-law. Had Sigismond stuck to his sword all might have gone well; but of late he had become perilously adept in the traitor's cunning trade. He despatched a secret message to René, king of Anjou, offering—in return for present help—to invade the kingdom of Naples, oust Alfonso of Arragon and restore it to the Angevines. René accepted, and landed at Genoa, but only in time to learn the sudden death of Alfonso. Sforza, learning all the details of the scheme, withdrew his forces from Rimini, alienated once and for ever from the traitor who would call the French to settle his quarrels; for Sforza, as we know, had reasons for wishing the kinsman of Charles of Orleans well on the other side the Alps. At this moment the succession of a Sienese, Æneas-Sylvius Piccolomini, to the papal throne under the title of Pius II., left Gismondo without a friend in Italy, five years after his triumphs in war and in peace of the glorious year 1450.

Little time now for temple-building. Gismondo, before Siena, had amused himself with drawing out plans for the dome in intervals of battles and traitorous despatches. He now found enough to do in keeping Piccinino at bay. The Angevines were of no service; they had but estranged the sympathies of

Italy from his cause. He tried even, it is said, to tempt the universal enemy of Christendom, the Grand Turk himself, to espouse his cause. There is no knowing to what lengths he would not go in his lonely, impotent, swift despair, and defiant ruin; and it is possible that he may have remembered the examples of Carlo Zeno and the great Visconti. One good and wise thing, at least, Gismondo did in these terrible years of friendless battle. He married the faithful Isotta, who proved herself a right valiant defender and regent of his city.

Meanwhile the Pope had enrolled himself among the active enemies of Sigismond. Siena was avenged. Amid great state and ceremony the effigy of Gismondo Malatesta was burned in the streets of Rome; interdict and excommunication were pronounced against him. Parricide, murderer of old men and innocent women, committer of adultery and incest, prince of traitors, enemy of God and man: so ran the terms of this tremendous accusation. But the Pope was not contented merely to accuse. He threatened not only Gismondo with his anathema, but whatsoever nation or army should arise to help him. Having thus disabled his enemy, he sent his forces against Rimini.

Sigismond, maddened and desperate, looked vainly round for an ally. Siena, Arragon, Florence, Milan, all were hostile, or at best neutral. Yet help must be found. Almost alone, facing a hundred perils, Gismondo trudged across the Apennines to the kingdom of Naples in search of his fatal friends the Angevines. But from them he got no help, not a promise even. Back to Rimini, desperate, baited, hurried the

miserable Sigismond. Finding the towns still held out, he took to the sea, and went to Venice—praying in his abject extremity for succour, for protection. And the Venetians, bound to him by old ties, did indeed afford him a slender assistance. By the aid of this he escaped death and flagrant ruin. The Pope made peace with him, though only on condition that he and his brother Domenico should make public penance for their misdeeds at Rome, resigning all their possessions save their capitals and a few castles, which also must devolve to the Holy See after the deaths of their present lords. And to these terms he consented. Nothing but his sword and his city were now left to the once triumphant Sigismond. Leaving Rimini to the staunch Isotta—*fœmina belligera et fortis*—he hired himself to the Venetians, to conduct their forces against the Turks in the Morea. Here a faint shadow of his former glory played for a while around him; and in 1465 Gismondo returned to Rimini, enriched, and bringing with him as his dearest possession the bones of Gemisthus Pletho, the Platonist, to place in the first sarcophagus of the temple.

Within the year Pius II. died, and Paul II. reigned in the Vatican. The new pontiff called Sigismond to Rome, and there concluded with him what seemed a most favourable treaty. But Gismondo was no sooner back in Rimini than the Pope, jealous of Venice, proposed to him to cede his city to Rome, in exchange for Spoleto and Foligno. When Sigismond comprehended this proposal a veritable madness seemed to seize him. Resign Rimini, the city he had saved at

thirteen, had fought for ever since, had spent his whole life and fortune in embellishing! He and Isotta and his sons go into exile in the marshes of Foligno! Rimini, with the Rocca and temple of his building, with the tombs of centuries of ancestors—Rimini, with its salts and its seaboards—yield *that?* Sigismond sent no answer to the Pope; but mad, in a burning fever, he journeyed by day and night to Rome. His attendants noticed that he never slept, that he clutched under his coat a dagger, never relaxed. Arrived at Rome, he went instantly to the Vatican, demanding a private audience; but the Pope, warned, it may be, appointed a meeting for the morrow. Then he received the lord of Rimini, guarded by a great concourse of princes and cardinals. Sigismond had not foreseen such a reception. Gazing wildly, and clutching still the ineffectual hidden dagger which he could not use, he made what terms he could, since revenge was impossible. The right to remain in Rimini was finally conceded him, but under the pretext of a captainship of troops the Pope kept him far from home, employed in petty guerilla warfare. A year later the fever had gained a fearful hold upon him. He dragged himself back to Rimini, to Isotta. Impoverished, friendless, powerless, the city was at least his own to die in. His last thoughts were for Isotta and her children, left friendless in an unkind world. Thus he died, the great Malatesta.

The Ladies of Milan.

"CHERCHEZ LA FEMME."

When Galeazzo Maria, Duke of Milan, was murdered in church at Christmas by a band of heroes, his brothers, the Duke of Bari and Lodovico il Moro, were absent on an embassy in France. The head of affairs was Cecco Simonetta, since many years the secretary and minister, first of Count Francesco, and later of his son. Having lived so long in the family, Simonetta was aware how much his dead master's children had to fear from their uncles. With one stroke of the pen he banished the Duke of Bari and Lodovico il Moro.

This was in 1476. For three years all went well in Milan. Simonetta had so long guided the course of affairs that the death of the Duke made little difference to the external policy of the state. Galeazzo Maria had called himself a Ghibelline, Cecco Simonetta dared at last to avow himself a Guelf; but under one as under the other, the course of Milan continued Liberal and French. Inside the city there were a few less murders,—less ominous stories than were told in the lifetime of the handsome, cruel,

dilettante Duke. His widow, the Duchesse Bonne, had the wardship of her children, and lived a pleasant life in her beautiful palace, where Commines remembered to have seen her in great authority. She had two little boys and a girl; she had excellent counsellors, a court full of admirers, beautiful clothes, and a devoted lover.

Yet the Duchess was not satisfied. Bonne de Savoie was an empty pate, vain and restless, as was the temper of her house. There was in the palace a young man who carved before her at table, Antonio Tassino, an adventurer from Ferrara, "of very mean parentage," not handsome, but with a certain grace and air in the way he wore his cloak. This was the Duchess's lover, and there was no matter of state (says Corio) but she consulted her carver before she allowed it to pass. It is not surprising that Simonetta—an old statesman, tenacious of dignity, in spite of his Liberalism, was scandalized at the importance of Tassino. It is equally easy to imagine how the successful Ferrarese was irritated by the disdain of Simonetta. So it fell out; and rather out of spite than from conviction, Tassino constituted himself the chief of the Ghibellines in Milan, merely intending to procure the fall of Simonetta. So great was his influence over the Duchess, that he persuaded her at last to privily recall her husband's brother, Il Moro—a Sforza, and therefore presumably a Ghibelline—who was at that moment engaged in the war at Genoa.

All that follows sound like a passage in some ancient novel of adventure. The Duchess sends to Genoa to Il Moro, who, coming at night to Milan,

is secretly admitted by the Duchess and her lover through the garden gate of the palace. Lodovico returns not alone; Bari is dead but, in place of the lost brother, Roberto di Sanseverino a great captain, dare-devil, incorrigible, comes at his heels: a man whom Simonetta had exiled with the sons of Francesco Sforza, a Ghibelline *à l'outrance*, a personal enemy of Cecco. These were the men whom Bonne, weary of her ancient counsellor's respectability, called home, "through great simplicity," as Commines declares, "supposing they would do the said Cecco no harm, and the truth is that so they had both of them sworn and promised."

When Sanseverino and Il Moro were safe in the palace, the Duchess sent for Simonetta and told him all she had done. She must have been alarmed to see the horror and consternation on the faithful secretary.* "Duchessa Illustrissima," said the man, with the quiet of despair, "he will cut off my head, that is all; a little time more and he will send you packing!" The Duchess probably remembered these words when, the third day after their return, Il Moro and Sanseverino caused the man who had signed their exile to be carried through the streets of Milan in a wine barrel, and then—still in this ridiculous tumbril—taken to the fortress at Pavia. There was Simonetta imprisoned; but once inside the gates his lot appeared to mend. Lodovico il Moro frequently rode across to Pavia to take counsel with the wise old statesmen and learn his views of the world. He went

* "Cecco ed i suoi colleghi oltra modo d'animo furono consternati" (Corio, book vii.).

indeed so often that the people of Milan began to murmur and to say that Lodovico, recalled by a Ghibelline *coup d'état*, was a Guelf in disguise. To reassure them on that head, in the month of October, 1480, Lodovico intimated to Simonetta—not without many apologies—that, in deference to popular prejudice, he must even consent to lose his head. And in that very month, the first part of the secretary's prophecy came true.

The second half was for a while delayed. Duchess Bonne found no reason to regret the step which had relieved her of an inconvenient old servant. "They used the lady very honourably in her judgment, seeking to content her humour in all things," said Commines, who knew them all.

"But all matters of importance they two despatched alone, making her privy but to what pleased them; and no greater pleasure could they do her than to communicate nothing with her. For they permitted her to give this Anthony Tassino what she would; they lodged him hard by her chamber; he carried her on horseback behind him in the town; and in her house was nothing but feasting and dancing." The Duchess had never led a happier life; but all that jollity endured but half a year. One day Lodovico took out his little nephews to walk in Milan; children are ever interested in things of warfare; he took them to the Rocca—the impregnable fortress—he took them inside; he did not bring them home.

English readers know what to expect when an ambitious uncle, in the Middle Ages, leaves two little Princes in the Tower. But no midnight assassin cut

short the days of Giangaleazzo and his brother Ermes. They were more useful to their uncle, living—at least until he had made his own position surer: for at present he only ruled in Milan as Tutor and Regent of the little Duke. But, by whatever title, he ruled effectually, and soon he rid his palace of the tearful and frivolous presence of Madame Bonne, whom he exiled from her duchy "for immorality," and who carried her inept remonstrances and her tarnished honour to find a none too chivalrous asylum at the court of her brother-in-law, Louis XI. of France, a man impatient of unsuccessful women.

Meanwhile Lodovico il Moro flourished in Milan. Under his cultured and dignified rule it became a magical city, a capital of masterpieces. There in 1483, Leonardo da Vinci took up his abode, cast his bronze statue of Francesco Sforza, painted pictures, and founded a school of Lombard painters, little less exquisite, mysterious, and sensual than himself. The Choir of Singers, whom Galeazzo Maria Sforza had brought across the Alps, increased, and the singing and playing of Milan became a thing of note. Temples and palaces sprang up as by enchantment; and learned humanists — grave Romans, bearded Greeks, astute Orientals—from all the centres of knowledge in the world, came to lecture on law, science, and the classics, in brilliant Milan. Nor was the Court of Venus, says Corio, less distinguished than the Court of Minerva. "All were willing to concede their best and fairest to the Court of Cupid; fathers their daughters, husbands their wives, brothers their sisters." And the laxity of Lombard

manners which had scandalized the very Court of Lorenzo de' Medici, in 1471, was not less abandoned, not less luxurious, although more natural and freer from cruelty under the sceptre of the Regent Lodovico who appears at the head of this princely retinue, a man majestic, suave, omniscient, as any Duke of Shakespeare's plays.

And yet the real Duke was seldom seen, seldom heard. It was polite to suppose him still a child. None the less every one knew he had been born in the year 1469, amid incredible rejoicings; and many had seen the great Lorenzo de' Medici when he came to the christening, and had looked on the magnificent necklace of diamonds which he had given the Duchess. "Ah, you shall be godfather to all my children!" the Duke Galeazzo Maria had cried with cordial *naïveté*. And now—ah, Time's revenges!—the Duke was murdered, the Duchess in exile, and the babe whom all men had welcomed—a prisoner rather than a ward in the hands of the ambitious Regent!

Men began to murmur, and when Giangaleazzo was about eighteen his uncle found himself unable any longer to defer his marriage. Years ago the child had been betrothed to Isabel of Arragon, the granddaughter of the King of Naples. She came to Milan in 1487. A little later Lodovico himself married a young wife, Beatrice, daughter of Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara.

So long as there had been no woman at the head of the Court of Milan, there had been no discord. The young Duke, half a captive, had a doglike docile affection for his tyrant; he was content to yield his place

and keep his title; and Lodovico was satisfied to have the place without the name. But Isabel of Arragon was a Neapolitan and a Spaniard—a nature passionate, arrogant, intense. In vain she urged her husband to assert his rights. He promised what she would, and then confessed their conversation to his uncle. When her child was born, and still the bride of Lodovico sat on the throne which should have been her throne—Isabel would no longer possess her soul in patience. This time she did not appeal to her husband—a beautiful youth, soft as silk, innocent as flowers, incapable of revenge or determination; she wrote to her father and her grandfather at Naples, men as different from him as men can be. She asserted her rights ("essendo giovane di grand' animo"); she told them of the intolerable yoke of Lodovico—of her husband, a grown man and a father, yet kept in tutelage. She told them doubtless by her messenger (no word of personal complaint appears in her letter) what Corio tells us: that amid all the luxury of Milan, the Duke and the Duchess procured with difficulty the bare necessities of life. There was much indignation in her old home, and Alfonso wrote to Il Moro demanding the throne and government of Milan for his son-in-law. "You make a laughing-stock of my daughter—shall we endure to see our blood despised?" * Lodovico, as his manner was, returned a soft answer. And a year or two went by in procrastination and recrimination; but in 1493 the house of Naples, in defence of the young Duke, declared war upon the Regent of Milan.

* Corio, book vii.

In another place I have spoken of the dismay and terror of that hour; the still rage of Lodovico—a rage not unmixed with joy and with the presentiment of success; the anger of his young wife, determined not to quit her throne, determined to take at last from the detested Isabel that one fine thing which as yet she had not dared to take from her: the title of Duchess. My readers know how, on the one hand, Lodovico sent to the Emperor admitting the illegal nature of the Sforza claim, and entreating him (for a consideration) to bestow it on him anew; how, on the other hand, he sent into France reminding Charles VIII. of the French claim to Naples; and how the French crossed the Alps in September; and how, in September also, very secretly, the Emperor's Investiture arrived in Milan; and how on the morrow after the French left Milan the young Duke died (Teodoro di Pavia discovering in his body the evident signs of poison); and how the people, overawed by the neighbourhood of the French, were taught to acclaim Lodovico, consecrated thus alike by Imperial privilege and popular voice; so that he ruled at last as Duke in Milan.

Meanwhile Isabel and her little son had wandered about in exile, vainly seeking supporters. Success smiled on her rival, Beatrice, the mother of two sons who each, after many adventures, should rule as Duke of Milan. In September, 1496, while Isabel, her child in her arms, was discovering the futility of resistance, Beatrice at Vigevano was entertaining Maximilian. The great Emperor was at that time a man of thirty-seven, with long whitening hair, dressed

in a long black velvet coat, a black woollen French cap, black stockings and sleeves; he wore no ornament save a little gold chain with the order of the Golden Fleece. He was under a vow to wear nothing but black until he could boast a Turkish victory. But, melancholy and grizzled Don Quixote as he appeared, Maximilian was no less an Emperor; and the Diary of Marino Sanuto shows us the splendour with which the Duke and Duchess of Milan made him welcome.

That splendour was very costly. Not only did it compel the Duke to levy grievous taxes (*grandissime exstrusione a li so populi*) on his subjects, so that they were like desperate men, desiring any change. If the expense of this entertainment was paid in tears, no less a price should be exacted for its fatigue. In September the Duchess Beatrice was pregnant: Marino Sanuto will conclude the story.*

* "Nuove del mexe de Zener. 1497 O. S.

"Chome a Milano nel Castello a dì 3, la duchessa, moglie dil ducha presente Lodovico, chiamata Beatrice, figlia dil ducha di Ferrara, poi parturido uno fiol morto; etiam la era morta 5 hore dopo el puto. Di la qual morte el ducha steva in gran mesticia, serade le fenestre in una camera a lume di candela. Et è da saper, come vidi una lettera, che detta Duchessa morite a dì 2 zener, a hora 6 di note, et che in quel zorno era stada di bona voglia in carretta per Milano, et fatto ballar in Castello fin hore 2 di note. Et lassò do soli figlioli, uno chiamato Maximiliano ch'è Conte di Pavia e l'altro, Sforza, di anni 3. La qual morte el Ducha non poteva tolerar, per il grande amor le portava et diceva non si voller puì curar ne de figlioli, ne di Stato, ne di cossa mondana; et apena voleva viver. Stava in una camera per mesticia tutta di panni negri, et cussi stete per 15 zorni. Et che in questa notte instessa in che la Duchessa morite, caschò a terra li muri dil suo zardin, non essendo sta ni vento ni terra moto; el qual da alcuni fu tolto per mal augurio."

"Diarii di Marino Sanudo, January 9, 1496."

"News of the month of January, 1496 (Old Style).
"How at Milan, in the castle, on the third day of the month, the Duchess, wife of the reigning Duke Lodovico, Beatrice by name, daughter of the Duke of Ferrara, was delivered of a still-born son; *etiam* she herself was dead five hours after the child. And the said death hath plunged the Duke in heavy sorrow, so that he keepeth his room, the shutters closed and candles lit in daytime. And 'tis also reported—as I saw it set down in another letter—that the said Duchess died on the second day of the month, at six o'clock after noon; and that very day she had gone riding in her carriage through the streets of Milan, and had held a ball at the castle until two o'clock after dinner. And she hath left only two children behind her, boys—the one, Maximilian, Count of Pavey; the other, Sforza, three years of age. And the Duke cannot suffer the sorrow of this loss, for the great love he bore to his wife; and he saith he hath no heart for his children, nor his State nor for aught under the sun; so that almost is he weary of his life And, out of sadness, he keepeth his chamber, which is hung all in black; and there for a fortnight he hath shut himself in. And 'tis said that, in the self-same night the Duchess died, the walls of her garden fell crashing to the ground, and yet was there neither tempest, wind nor earthquake; which thing was held by many for a sign of very evil omen."

Last year I was in Lombardy, and, as a faithful adherent of the Viscontis, I stayed a little in Pavia. I found it a rather gloomy little Lombard town, white-

washed and paven. Here and there a wine-coloured wall or tower broke the pallid monotony of the streets. The famous fortress, where Isabel of Arragon eat her heart in bitterness so many years, still exists, much rebuilt and altered indeed, but always a mass of fine red colour. In Pavia, however, there was nothing so interesting to me as those phantoms of vanished Viscontis and long-supplanted Sforzas that seemed so strangely out of place in this sad little sordid university town. And among these ranks of tragic shadows, the least forgiven, the least beloved, was always the Duchess Beatrice.

I had known her too long, the youthful and charming Lady Macbeth of Lombardy. I knew her as well as one can know a person, familiar through the gossip of acquaintance, although unseen and distant. I had heard of her as a haughty and ambitious woman, accepting with a smile the crimes that placed the crown of Milan on her head. She appeared as some Herodias of Luini's, exquisite and sinister. And yet I knew she had been dearly worshipped in her lifetime and long lamented in her tomb. There are such Sirens, heartless and chill themselves, but capable of seizing an honest love with the same hands that grasp at a blood-stained treasure. Such, in my eyes, was the adored and evil wife of Lodovico il Moro.

It was Christmas-time and cold; with difficulty I roused myself to visit the Certosa. It is six miles, I suppose, from Pavia. The wretched carriage slowly dragged along through the muddy country; and from the whitened window one felt rather than saw the immense desolation of the view. On either hand of the

raised road, a sluggish canal, and beyond a monotonous landscape of brown marshy pastures and bright green rice fields flecked with water, across which the scant snow drifted. The road seemed to extend for ever in front, unbroken, unturning. Suddenly in the middle of the country the carriage stopped; I walked a few steps up a muddy lane. To the right over a wall there appeared a great dome, with rose-red minarets, with spires of pale red, ivory and marble, among innumerable shaft-like towers tipped with cream-white columns. It is the Certosa.

At another season and in better health I should have found much to linger over in the great façade of the Certosa, fantastic, incoherent as a Midsummer Night's Dream. Every inch of the front is covered thickly with ornament in high relief—Roman emperors and paladins of chivalry, eagles with praying angels on their outspread pinions, exquisite maidens floating full-length on a dolphin's back, Sirens suckling their unearthly babes, hippogriffs, Prophets of Israel: strange, unexpected as the visions of delirium, they are assembled there. But, alone, in the bitter wind, I glanced at it all for a moment and entered the vast foundation of Giangaleazzo Visconti. Great halls, enormous, cold, spoiled as much as may be by the seventeenth century; a few good pictures by Borgognone, many bad ones; posthumous portraits of the great Viscontis: it was not so interesting as I had supposed.

Still I wandered on, making reflections on the difference of type in the Sforza and Visconti heads: the older tyrants keen-faced, refined with delicate,

bone-less oval faces, and thin firm lips ridged out in a narrow line. There is something wolf-like in the long pointed noses, the pointed chins, low foreheads, as well as in the keen eyes, narrow and high in the head; altogether an interesting type, subtle, cruel, intellectual, and fierce. The Sforzas with their Wellington noses, their strongly marked eyebrows, prim-pursed lips and rounded chins, seem a square-faced kindly race of captains. Lodovico il Moro himself is there, with the fat face and fine chin of the elderly Napoleon, the delicate beak-like nose of Wellington; a small querulous neat-lipped mouth, and immense eyebrows, stretched like the talons of an eagle across the low forehead, complete the odd, refined physiognomy of the man. I looked at him with interest for a moment. But there, straight before me, stood the tomb of the wife he lost so young, the Duchess Beatrice.

To think that she is dead, and to think she was a woman! Impossible. She is a lively child, fallen asleep in playtime: motionless, but full of a contained vivacity. Her tumbled curls hang loosely round her shoulders, and stand up in a little frizz above the rounded childish forehead. As she lies there, a look of infantine candour is diffused over the soft, adorable, irregular features. She has straight, brief eyebrows like a little girl, but her closed eyelids are rounded like the petals of a thick white flower, and richly fringed with lashes. The little nose is of no particular shape—not quite a straight nose, but certainly not a snub; it is the prettiest nose at Court, with a rounded end like a child's. The cheeks,

too, are round apple-cheeks, not in the least like the Herodias of Luini; and round is the neat bewitching chin. But her chief beauty is her mouth—a mouth with the soft-closed lips of a dear child pretending to be asleep, yet smiling as if to say, "Soon I shall jump up and throw my arms round your neck, and you will be so surprised!"

The round head rises from a long plump throat. The small figure too is slender and plump at once, and very small, full of life still, it seems, under the pretty tight silk dress, with the slashed and purfled sleeves, and the long train of brocade, so lovingly, so carefully arranged not to encumber nor hide those little pattened feet, that were so fain of dancing and seem so ready to awake and dance again. This, then, is the famous Beatrice!—I looked and looked, at last I understood not only her, but the love of Lodovico: "And so, dear child, thou canst not live without a crown?—Ah well! What shouldst thou know of murder, dishonour, and the ruin of great states? Thou wilt never understand these gloomy things, and I shall pay the price—Ah God in heaven, I thank Thee for the gift of an immortal soul, since I may lose it for the pleasure of this child!"

Perhaps it was in this way that Lodovico reasoned; or perhaps it may be that at heart Macbeth is no less ambitious than his wife. Who knows? The wife, at least, must stand for something. At least, some share in the ruin of their country must be accorded to these three women—Bonne, who recalled Lodovico to Milan; Isabel, who inspired the war of Arragon and Sforza; and Beatrice, whose ambition urged her husband to invite the French to Italy.

The Flight of Piero de' Medici.

(October–November, 1494.)

When, in the October of 1494, the King of France marched south from Asti, a torpor of stupefaction fell upon the princes of Italy. For the last three years there was no one of them but had coquetted more or less with France; there was no one of them but was the enemy of that arrogant house of Arragon which had lost Scutari to Venice, and which had dared reprove the usurpation of Milan by Lodovico Sforza. Charles was coming into Italy to dethrone these evil and malignant princes, "fathers of all treason," as the author of "De Bello Gallico" has called them; "tyrants by whom I think that Nero himself would seem a saint." But now that the French were actually in Lombardy, it struck the Italian despots with ominous force that he might not be content with only Naples. Few of them had any just title to their possessions; none of them, save Venice, could resist the power of France. "The princes of Italy," wrote the Venetian secretary, "aghast at this passing of the mountains, tried to arrange that the King should pass no farther south, each one doubting for his own estate, and doubting most of all the enthusiasm of

his own subjects." For if the tyrants of Italy dreaded the advent of the French, the populace—the poor, starved, degraded slaves of these illegal despots—welcomed their coming with open arms. "They were so called and cried upon," goes on our author, "so invoked by all the populace of Italy, that there was none who could withstand them, for all the people said *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.*"

Sorely he was needed, that *Flagellum Dei*, of whom the inspired voice of Savonarola prophesied daily in the great Cathedral of Florence. Sorely he was required. For that autumnal Italy which at their coming the Frenchmen found so fair, was no more than a waving green enchanted garden full of poisons—poisons for the body, swift or slow, used without scruple by Venice and Milan as a means to power, by Rome as an easy way to wealth, by Naples for the vile gratification of cruel passions. The terrible pages from the "Secreta Secretissima," published by Lamansky in 1884, the folios of Marino Sanuto's "Diaries," the chronicles which fill the "Archivio Storico," are full of tragic murders, the more tragical because so commonplace; and the quiet, impartial voice of Philippe de Commines falters when he speaks of "les pitiez d'Italie."

Not only poison for the enviable, slavery for the conquered, famine and cruelty for the poor, and treachery among the princes of the earth; for all alike there was a corrupt and horrible dissolution of moral restraints. "There is no city in Italy," records the Venetian, "not Rome or Naples, not Bologna, Florence, Milan, or Ferrara, not my own Venice even,

that is holier than the Cities of the Plain." Milan, with the frescoes of Leonardo fresh upon the walls; Venice, where the girl-madonnas of Giovanni Bellini were not yet all begun; Florence, peopled with the saints of Botticelli, with the angels of the aged Gozzoli upon the walls of Piero de' Medici's palace; Ferrara, where the youthful Ariosto dwelt—these homes of the brightest and the fairest art were morally no better than the Rome of the Borgias or the Naples of Ferdinand and Alfonso. They were vile dens of corruption. And yet the painted angels of Florence, the saints of Lombardy, were *not* a mere external fashion, a refined hypocrisy; they were the expression of a movement in Italian hearts deeper than even this permeating evil—pure underneath the mask of their perversion. When the French came into Lombardy they found a contagion of spiritual enthusiasm among the people; they encountered holy women who neither ate, drank, nor slept, but dwelt in a continual ecstasy; and as they went along the roads the poorer inhabitants came out to meet them, bearing palms in their hands, and having on their pale and haggard faces a strange exalted smile. "Blessed is he," they sang, "who cometh in the name of the Lord;" for the people were eager to be quit of the sin that hemmed them round. They embraced the knees of their conquerors, and suffered willingly a great deal of hardship at their hands, glad to be purified for ever by the Scourge of God.

Had it not been for the welcome that they met, the French could never have penetrated into Italy. They came ill-provided, without good generals, without

money. "There's not a penny in the treasury," wrote Orleans to Ridolfi, in October, "and I have spent four thousand ducats of my own to pay the troops." The Italian despots trusted that this lack of means would cause the French to retire before the winter, and Orleans was in secret treaty with them to this end. Milan, says this interested advocate, would be enough to satisfy the honour of France—Milan and a yearly homage paid by Naples to the Crown of France.* But these designs were frustrated by the enthusiasm with which the French were received in the invaded provinces. The women brought their jewels to pay the troops; the men threw open the gates of the cities; every difficulty was overridden, for, says Commines, touched with the grave exaltation of Italy, "God was Himself our leader: *Dieu monstroit conduire l'entreprise.*"

"At our first arrival," he goes on, "the people honoured us as saints, supposing all faith and virtue to be in us; but this opinion endured not long." The rude French soldiery—Gascons, Normans, Swiss, and German mercenaries—pathetically ignorant of the fancied aureole playing round their weatherbeaten faces, marched through Italy as through any other conquered country. At Rapallo they put the town to the sword; they took Fivizzano by a murderous assault; they shed much blood at Pontremoli; for they could not understand that they seemed the Elect of Heaven, and they sought by fierce reprisals to keep up a military prestige. But if in Lombardy, in

* See Desjardins I., "Négociations diplomatiques dans la Toscane."

Lunigiana, the rude passage of the troops had to some extent dispelled the illusions of the people—where the army had not yet arrived the cities with open gates awaited it in holy awe. Arragon retired from point to point without a battle fought. The subjects of Catarina Sforza threatened her with rebellion if she refused submission to the French; Bologna, against the will of Bentivoglio, insisted on making peace with Charles. And in the Duomo of Florence, where Savonarola preached of the Purifying Scourge of God, the people shouted, "Franza, Franza!" where they were only used to sob in bitter patience, "Misericordia." And to these enthusiasts, impatient of Medicean luxury, it was no drawback that the King, their deliverer, was a mere ugly youth, "more a monster than a man," as Guicciardini plainly states, quite uncultured, and knowing neither Greek nor Latin. "In fact," as the Milanese Corio remarked, "an uninstructed person, though none the less able to address his soldiery in telling terms, so that for love of him they dash upon the enemy, shouting, 'Alive or dead!'" In the autumn of 1494 this ugly, bright-eyed youth had inspired an equal devotion in the populace of Florence.

The people were led by the monk Savonarola; but many of the old Florentine families (the Nerli, Gualterotti, Sonderini, Capponi) were no less anxious than the people to banish their *parvenu* tyrant. Out of all the crowd of monks, enthusiasts, bankers, patricians, and politicians which made up the popular party, two *silhouettes* stand strongly forth. One is the preacher Savonarola—a man of middle height, of dark com-

plexion, and sanguine, bilious temperament. At forty-two his face is lined with seams and wrinkles—a harsh, strong face with a sweet expression, like Samson's honey in the lion's mouth; eyes that flash and flame from under shaggy black eyebrows and shed their spiritual gleam over the heavy Roman nose and the large mouth with the loose, thick lips of the orator firmly closed and drawn into a painful smile; a kind, noble, spiritual, tragic face, with something mad in it, or something at the least that must pass for mad in this uninspired and transitory world.

This was the man who for a good four years was virtually the ruler of Florence; this was the man who, more than any other, helped on the cause of France in Italy. "A man of holy life," says Commines, who knew him. And Guicciardini describes him: "Full of charity, of natural goodness, and religion—so clever in philosophy, one would think he himself had had the making of it; without a trace of lust or avarice; but if he had a vice it was simulation, the prompting of a proud ambition." One more voice arrests us: "A treacherous friar, worthy the end of the wicked." But it is Marino Sanuto who speaks, the political enemy of Savonarola and a personal stranger to his qualities.

Behind the strong profile of the friar we note another head, also worthy of remark. This is Piero Capponi, a man of old Florentine family, republican by descent. Sturdily built and square, with brilliant eyes, he has a certain air of a courser sniffing battle; brief and resolute in speech, vigorously mature in age, he seems the very embodiment of virile energy.

He is rich, for an astrologer at his birth having foretold his death in battle, he was persuaded by his father to devote himself to commerce. The man worked at money-getting with the restless, dominant force he put into everything he did, and made his fortune in a sort of fury. Then he threw up his career, having enough, and entered public life at thirty years of age. A republican, his restless need of activity made him accept the Medicean service. He had been ambassador in France, and was as French as Savonarola. "See them near, like ghosts," he used to say, "and there is nothing to be afraid of in these French." Although at this time the right arm of the Republic, his patrician birth, his acquaintance with the magnificence of princes, made him recoil from the extremer measures of the monk. A man of the greatest spirit, the staunchest energy, the very width of his views and his natural love of change made him a danger to a peaceful but imperfect Government. Born to be a great captain, he loved, above all things, a difficult campaign; and he spent his life in fighting alternately his enemies and his friends, until at last the astrologer's prediction, true in spite of human prudence, set a bridle on his martial soul.

These two men represent the two parties who chiefly desired the advent of the French—the enthusiasts, the poor, the children of Savonarola, and the powerful burghers, as rich and may be better born than Piero de' Medici, who resented their tyrant's views on the republic, who resented almost more his alliance with the detested Spanish autocrats of Naples. On the other side — the side of the Orsini, of Cardinal

Bibbiena, of Bernardò del Nero, and the aristocratic party, there is but one man that can arrest us as Capponi or Savonarola must arrest us, and that is Piero de' Medici himself.

Piero and the King of France were mortal enemies; the King of Naples had no more resolved ally than Medici, though the French inclinations of the city prevented him from showing the true colour of his opinions. He was, in fact, "immoderately bound up with Arragon, and determined to chance the same fortune," as Guicciardini tells us; since in return for this alliance he had arranged that Ferdinand of Naples should support him in turning his old republic into a new monarchy. Naples in those days represented in Italy the kingdom as distinguished from the Signory; it was the natural pole-star of the aristocrat. And Piero was drawn to the south as much by sentiment as by inclination; his mother Clarice, his young wife Alfonsina, both came of the Roman family of Orsini.

In 1494 Piero de' Medici was about four-and-twenty years of age. He was beautiful in person and very vigorous. He was clever at games and sports; he had a charming way of pronouncing his words, a winning voice, and a great facility in making impromtu verses. But this handsome, graceful personage was not popular in Florence. He was haughty and arrogant beyond expression, subject to furies of animal anger, proud, and cruel. He would have men waylaid at night in the street and beaten violently by private bravos. He was so absolute, that even in matters he did not pretend to understand, he would govern all according to his fancy. And this aristo-

crat of a free republic was as fiery, vain, careless, and impatient as he was presumptuous. While the people murmured "Franza" with white excited faces; while Savonarola was thundering his prophecies of the *Flagellum Dei*; while news of the massacres and the irresistible advance of France struck a religious terror into Tuscany—the young head of the state left the garrisons unprovided and unguarded; not a week's provisions in Sarzana or Pietra Santa; not a handful of infantry in the fastnesses of the hills. While winds of rebellion, war, and outrage swept the city, he, the one man unmoved, was to be seen as usual playing *pallone* in the public streets, a light-minded aristocrat, full of a certain easy and handsome bravado, caring for no one's safety, not even for his own.

But even Piero, as he knocked the tennis-ball against the palace front, must now and then have felt a certain twinge of anxiety. For every day brought news of the farther retreat of Arragon, and only success, and brilliant success, could justify the Arragonese alliance in the eyes of the Florentines. Already that aristocratic alliance had touched the mercantile republic in a sensitive point: in June the King of France had expelled the Florentine bankers and merchants out of his kingdom. This meant ruin to many honourable families, and decided the burghers to join the party of Savonarola, so weakening the Medicean faction that people whispered it was Capponi who had thus advised King Charles, in order to disgust the impoverished merchants with their tyrant. But the documents published in Desjardins

contradict this supposition. It was from Lodovico il Moro, the determined enemy of Florence and of Piero, that King Charles accepted this happy suggestion.

The burghers were all for France, in order to regain their commerce. The people, under Savonarola, the Republican families under Capponi, desired nothing more than the advent of King Charles. The very cousins of Piero himself had become so French, that a year ago he had exiled them to their country villas, where they lived in comfortable durance, surrounded by the light of popular martyrdom. To resist all these varied forces, Piero, on his side, could count a few old friends of his father, such as Bernardò del Nero and his secretary Bibbiena, an ambitious priest, and his wife's brother, Pagolo Orsini, captain of the forces of the republic.

The situation was grave indeed, but he took it lightly, with a facile temerity that would not condescend to prudence. On the 3rd of October his ambassador at Milan wrote that the French spoke of wintering in Pisa and Sarzana. Yet not a single fortress had a week's provisions. So late as the 22nd of October, in answer to a last appeal from France, he sent the Bishop of Arezzo to King Charles with a vague, exasperating, indecisive answer. The same week the two cousins of Piero escaped from their villas, and rode post-haste to the French camp. "Sire," they cried to Charles, "be not angry with Florence. The tyrant is against you, but you have the faithful devotion of the people." The King was well inclined to believe the two young men with whom he had often practised, and who had suffered a year's

imprisonment for his sake. "We do not confuse the people of Florence with the governor," answered the Council. "The last alone is the King's enemy." And, departing from Piacenza, the armies of France marched on the Florentine territories.

In a few days they were on the Tuscan border. At Fivizzano and Pontremoli they had so avenged a slight resistance that the gates flew open at their approach. Who dare resist the Scourge of God? Terror and awe bent every head before them. In Florence the populace surged along the narrow streets, and declared they would not resist the King of France. Three days after Piero had sent off the Bishop of Arezzo, a popular tumult seemed ready to burst at any moment.

What could he do? The French were now within fifty miles of Pisa, and though the mountain fortresses ought to have kept them at bay all the winter long, Piero remembered too late that he had forgotten to provision them; that he had neglected to call the Pisan hostages into Florence, and that Pisa hated her cruel mistress, and was certain to revolt to France. Only one course suggested itself to the desperate young man, and this course was so adventurous, romantic, and unusual, that it captivated at once his unsteady imagination. Many years ago, when Arragon had worsted Florence on the battlefield, Lorenzo de' Medici had gone as his own ambassador to Naples, running, it is true, a great risk of steel or poison, but by his fascinating address making a devoted friend of an exasperated enemy. Piero determined to follow the example of his father. On

the 26th of October he heard that the French were arriving before Sarzana, within two days' march of Florence. On the evening of that day the tyrant of Florence secretly escaped from his own palace, left the city in the dusk of evening, and rode through the chill autumn night as far as Empoli.

II.

"EMPOLI, 26 *Oct.*, 1494.

"*Piero de' Medici to the Signory of Florence.*

"Because I believe I ought not to suffer imputation or reproach for that which, according to my mind and feeble judgment, appeared to me the most salutary remedy to preserve my menaced country, I depart from you to offer myself to the most Christian king, and to turn on to my own head the storm that menaces my native land. Nor is there any consequent punishment, but I would rather suffer it in my own person than behold it inflicted on this republic.

"After all, I am not the first of my house to go on such an enterprise; and since there is no fatigue, hardship, cost, nay not even death itself, but, endured for any one of you, it would appear to me a benefit, how much more do I not welcome these rude chances for the sake of the universal city!

"Be sure, if I return it will be to bring good tidings to you and to the city; either this, or I shall leave my life in the camp of the enemy.

"To you, in this extreme moment, I recommend my brothers and my children. And, for the faith and affection you bare to the bones of Lorenzo my father, I pray you be content to pray to God for me." *

"EMPOLI, 26 *Oct.*

"*Piero de' Medici to Bibbiena.*

"Comfort, dear Bibbiena, my little household troop till I return; and, above all things, be good to Alfonsina and to poor

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* "Négociations diplomatiques dans la Toscane," vol. i. p. 587, *et seq.*

ittle Lorenzino* who has none of the blame to bear. All of you, pray to God for me and for the city."

"PISA, 27 *Oct.*, 1494.

"*Piero de' Medici to Bibbiena.*

"I arrived in Pisa this evening, very weary with the road, with my own thoughts, with the rain that has rained the live-long day, and with the uncomfortable bed I had last night. . . 'Tis but a line I send you, only that you may assure my magnificent Messer Marino (the Neapolitan Ambassador) of the complete devotion that I bear his master. . . A devotion which to day *traho ad immolandum!* Perchance it is my fault I did not earlier discover the desertion of the Florentines, the want of money, arms, and credit that I had; but 'tis so difficult to doubt in such a city as our Florence. Let me be excused before His Majesty, since I am not the first sick man who has gone to death's door before he has discovered he was mortal. In short, tell him this, that even unto hell I will keep my faith to His Majesty King Alfonso (*insino all' Inferno conserverò la fede mia al Signor Re Alfonso*). And perhaps in my present low and humble state, I may serve him better as a private gentleman in the camp of France than I served him as the first in Florence."

"PIETRA SANTA, 29 *Oct.*

"*Piero de' Medici to Bibbiena.*

"I beg you ask the Signory to send here at once 500 foot. With so much aid we might hold out, at least until I have made good terms. . . There is not much to eat, 'tis true, but there is always something. And send off the men-at-arms to Pisa.

"I wrote to the Duke of Milan when I was at Pisa. I believe him to have reached Sarzana. . . Arrange all these matters that there be no hitch."

"30 *Oct.*, 1494.

"*Piero de' Medici to Bibbiena.*

"Last night the French lords came here to Pietra Santa, and

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* His infant son, born 1492, in after days the father of Catherine de' Medici.

were most honourably received. The Bishop of St. Malo tells me the King will be at Florence *viâ* Pisa in four or five days.

"It is to fetch *me* they have come. The King's herald is with them. I am just off to Sarzana with St. Malo and two other gentle lords. Rejoice with me at the honour they have done me. These lords were sent here on purpose to receive me! Tell the Eight! Tell Alfonsina! Tell Monsignore.* Tell Giuliano!"

III.

Piero de' Medici set out for the French camp from Pietra Santa on the 30th of October. Although the winter was afterwards so mild, the autumn had been severe, and the roads were marvellously deep with snow. All round Sarzana there extends a barren country, desolate, and full of little hills. At last a long ride of thirty miles brought the tired horsemen in sight of the French camp. The tents were pitched all round the frontier-fortress, a strong place in bad repair, which had cost the Republic fifty thousand florins not many years ago. Sarzana was guarded by Sarzanello, a fort surrounded by great towers built on a steep hill above the town. When Piero arrived the French were beginning to bombard Sarzanello with that strange, improved artillery of theirs which caused such panic in Italy. The young man, alone in the midst of an enemy he had done his best to ruin, assailed by visions of death and prison, was exhausted with fatigue, with restrained terror, and with the novelty of his position. The French lords led him at once to the tent of Charles. Contrary to his

* The boy-cardinal, Giovanni de' Medici, Piero's brother, afterwards Leo X.

expectations, the King—a young man of his own age —received him kindly, even benignly. They were not going to kill him after all. In the exquisite relaxation of his dread, Piero sank upon his knees before the King, stammered an excuse, and hung his handsome head. "I will do everything your Majesty may require!"

Where was now that devotion to Arragon, which (as he told Bibbiena with so proud a swagger) *traho ad immolandum?* Where was that loyalty, "which I shall preserve in hell itself"? They had vanished to that dim limbo of generous resolutions where they would meet his fealty to the Republic, his love of country, and his self-sacrificing affection for his people. All these golden sentiments had completely vanished from the mind of Piero. The warm tent, after the long snowy ride, the kind reception, so different from his terrified previsions, the amiable friendliness of the French lords, who showed no humiliating surprise at his visit, all combined to fill him with a sense of genial relief. After all, Capponi was right: "Look at these French near, and there is nothing to be afraid of." Piero, if he was afraid at all, was only filled with that pleasant awe which the reverential *parvenu* experiences when received on kindly terms in aristocratic society. He had not quite recovered yet from the honour that the French had shown him in sending St. Malo and the King's herald to receive him. Perhaps on the rack Piero might have kept his word an hour or so. It vanished quite out of remembrance as soon as he felt the soft influence of royal converse.

And this was the King, the second Charlemagne, the marvel of nations, the terrible *Flagellum Dei!* Piero, accustomed to the kind voice, raised his eyes, and beheld a very small man of four-and-twenty, unusually youthful in aspect, with high shoulders, a sickly air, and extraordinarily thin long legs. He looked not quite grown up; and he was certainly very ugly, with his large head, long nose, wide mouth, and timid, delicate appearance. His ugliness was, however, redeemed by a pair of singularly beautiful and shining eyes, whose intelligent, kind, straightforward glance promised a liberal and honest nature. The King was, in fact, both liberal and honest; a simple, inconsequent, honourable creature, too nonchalant to make himself obeyed, and too incapable of dissimulation to win by art what he could not gain by force. He was, we learn from Commines, "the gentlest creature alive; of no great sense, but of so good a nature it were impossible to find a kinder creature; a youth but newly crept out of the shell." This description does not promise a very terrible monarch, or an insidious diplomatist, but all the duplicity of Lodovico il Moro could not have gained a greater triumph than the careless good-nature of Charles achieved over the flattered Florentine.

The King sat like a quaint elfin child in his tent among his splendid counsellors. These polite and courtly people had rather a more decided smile than usual about their pleasant lips as they glanced towards Piero. The young Florentine was submerged, drowned, in his satisfaction with the King and with his own reception. He was on the best

terms with his friend, the King of France. Charles, who did not quite understand the situation, asked a great deal more than ever he hoped to obtain from penitent Florence, thinking he would have to abate his demands (a few weeks in Italy had taught him how to bargain), especially when dealing with a mercantile person like Piero de' Medici. He put forward in fact an extravagant requisition: the Florentine troops were all to be dismissed (the troops that Piero had ordered yesterday), the fortresses of Sarzana, of Sarzanello, Librafatto, Pisa, Leghorn, and Pietra Santa were to be delivered to the King; his army was to have free passage, and he was to receive a loan of 200,000 ducats. Now the French party of Florence were prepared to allow the King to lodge in Pisa, and to grant him a free passage, but more than this had never been dreamed of by Savonarola or Capponi. Piero, however, when he heard the King's demand, did not abate a jot of it. Who was he to contradict the King? ("I go," he had said; "I go head down in front of peril to bring you back a welcome message, or else to leave my bones in the camp of the enemy!") He immediately agreed to grant the whole, yielding the entire force and estate of Florence into the power of France. "Those that negotiated with the said Peter." says Commines, "have often told me, scoffing and jesting at him, that they wondered to see him so lightly condescend to so weighty a matter, granting more than they looked for." And Guicciardini adds: "There was no Frenchman there that did not greatly marvel that Piero so easily consented to

matters of so great importance, because without a doubt the King would have accepted very far inferior conditions." But Piero, the hero of fidelity, the new Lorenzo, did not think of this. "I require the six fortresses, the dismissal of your army, free passage, and a loan of 200,000 ducats," repeated the slow, stammering, timid voice of the King. "I agree," said Piero.

There was a silence in the tent, half-amused, half-painful, a feeling as if they had overreached a little child.

IV.

Piero de' Medici was not the only Italian tyrant who had come to visit the camp of Charles before Sarzana. The day after Piero had arrived, Lodovico il Moro of Milan, who had been called home from Piacenza by the most timely death of his nephew, returned this time as Duke of Milan, to the tents of his allies. He had not expected to encounter there the ally of Alfonso, the tyrant of Florence, and the meeting was not pleasant. Lodovico had an especial dislike to Piero de' Medici; firstly, because Florence possessed the forts of Pietra Santa and Sarzana, which used to belong to the Genoese, of whom Lodovico was the suzerain; secondly, because Piero was the staunchest ally of Arragon in Italy; and lastly, because on one occasion that charming fool had actually outwitted the wise Lodovico himself. On this occasion Piero, suspecting Lodovico of a Janus face that turned different fronts to Florence and to France, had hidden the French ambassador behind

a screen in his audience-chamber, while he made Lodovico's ambassador protest that Charles had no surer enemy than his master. The French envoy had been very properly scandalized, but instead of preserving a quiet distrust of Milan, King Charles had proclaimed his wrongs from the house-tops; Lodovico had persuaded him they were inventions of the enemy, and henceforth had vowed an eternal hate to Piero.

Thus there was a personal coolness between the Duke of Milan and the head of the Florentine Republic; but on political grounds their meeting was still more awkward. Lodovico il Moro was a man who loved to fish in troubled waters. He had sown dislike and distrust between the French and Florence; he had meant the Florentines to keep the troops of Charles all the winter imprisoned in the fastnesses of their hills. And when in the spring, the King, disgusted with the Neapolitan enterprise, should return to France, he had hoped to obtain for himself whatever places the French had gained from Tuscany. Lodovico had gained the great object which had made him call the French into Italy; he was Duke of Milan. He now wished no farther progress for Charles. He hoped that the King might winter in Tuscany, and then retire to France, having handed over to Milan Sarzana and Pietra Santa, and leaving behind an intimidated Naples, a plundered Florence, a triumphant and victorious Milan. Judge of his immense displeasure when he discovered that, in the few days of his absence, Piero de' Medici had delivered to the King the passes of the Apennines.

Lodovico was of that far-sighted order of politicians who, when a cherished project fails, have ever an under-study ready to supply its place. It was an unfortunate fact that nothing now prevented Charles from making himself the lord of Italy; but at any rate Milan might gain possession of the towns in the Lunigiana. Lodovico went to Charles, and asked him for the six fortresses which Piero had yielded yesterday. But Charles, though a very simple and youthful person, was not a fool; he would not close himself in a trap in the South of Italy with all the passes homeward shut behind him. He answered Lodovico that he preferred to keep the fortresses, at least until after his return from Naples. The Duke of Milan was a grave and modest man, quiet in manner and majestic, never irascible or angry; he feigned to agree with his ally the King of France. Yes, it would certainly be wiser for Charles to keep the passes; and, to add a point to his conciliation, he remembered that Milan owed the King the 30,000 ducats due for the investiture of Genoa.

But, notwithstanding his beautiful manners, the Duke of Milan did not smile when, in the King's camp, he encountered the man who had spoiled all his well-considered policy. He had left Milan at an awkward moment in order to get the promise of Sarzana and Pietra Santa. The King had promised him nothing; had got beyond his reach, had just cost him 30,000 ducats; and all this was the fault of Piero. The young Florentine saw the look of irritation on Lodovico's face, and in his eternal self-preoccupation he thought it due to the fact

that he had received no official welcome into Tuscany.

"I rode out to meet you yesterday," cried Piero, "but I could not find you anywhere. You must have missed the way!"

"It is true, young man," said Lodovico, in his grave, sinister voice; "it is true that one of us has missed the way. But it is possible that *you* may be the man."

Charles—looking on, understanding little, thinking far more of the falcon on his wrist than of the manœuvres and intrigues of these Italians—Charles was no match for either of these men. And yet, in coming to his camp, each of them had missed the way. Had the merciful curtain of the future been for a moment lifted on that evening, either had swooned with terror to see to what end that mistaken path should lead them. What is this? An old French street, surging with an eager mob, through which there jostles a long line of guards and archers; in their midst a tall man, dressed in black camlet, seated on a mule. In his hands he holds his biretta, and lifts up, unshaded, his pale, courageous face, showing in all his bearing a great contempt of death. It is Lodovico, Duke of Milan, riding to his cage at Loches.

And there, in the rapidly running Garigliano, where the French soldiery are struggling in their all too hasty flight, that dead, comely face, swirled here and there by the dark, washing waters—that is the face of Piero de' Medici.

V.

But the end is not yet; a little longer the cunning Lodovico and the empty-headed Medici have still their parts to play, and for the next few days the part of Piero is no easy one. He has to answer to Florence for having delivered her, without her own consent, into the hands of the French.

For the Signory were still in ignorance of this sad disposal of their fate. So soon as they discovered the flight of Piero they sent off seven envoys to the camp of Charles to treat with the King, "with Piero or without Piero," and to express the thanks of Florence for his honourable welcome accorded "to our fellow-citizen, Piero de' Medici." When the seven Florentine negotiators arrived at the French camp they found the French had been three days already in Sarzana and Sarzanello; they found that their fellow-citizen had dispossessed them of all that they had gained in a hundred years or more—of Sarzana, their frontier town; Pietra Santa, which which had cost them 150,000 ducats and a two months' siege; of Leghorn and Pisa—her seaports, the two eyes of Florence—without which her commerce were impossible: and he had promised, in the name of the Republic, the extravagant subsidy of 200,000 ducats!

Before the bad news could reach home the Signory had sent off a second embassy of five: Tanai dei Nerli, Savonarola, Capponi, and two other staunch Republicans, Guelfs and democrats, the leaders of the French party. They arrived to discover in their

late opponent a more disastrous friend, so French that he had ceased to be Florentine at all. Capponi then and there determined to prevent the continuance of the Medici in Florence. Savonarola spoke words of tragic warning to the astonished King: "If thou respect not Florence, God shall whip thee with His whips and scourges." But no eloquence and no resolve could change the fact that the French were in the fortresses.

So the twelve ambassadors mournfully set their faces homewards; and Piero also returned to Florence—Piero, brilliant, presumptuous, arrogant as ever. There was no sign of shame or sorrow about him; but even he could notice the cold reception of the people. Every man frowned upon him as he passed along the streets; they murmured together and talked of banishment.

It was the 8th of November when he came home to Florence. On the morning of the 9th he rode to the Piazza with his ordinary guard to announce the King's coming, but when he knocked at the gate of the Palazzo Vecchio, young Nerli refused to let him in unless he sent away his soldiery. Piero, indignant at this behaviour, rode home again and sent a message to his wife's brother, Pagolo Orsini, captain of the horse, to bid him lead the troops at once to Florence. Meanwhile, in the streets the ominous cry of "Liberty, liberty!" gathered and grew. All the adventurous temper of Piero de' Medici was roused. Without waiting for the troops, he armed himself and a few servants, and rushed cavalcading along the hostile streets, crying out the rallying cry of his

family, "Palle! Palle!" But everywhere he was met with sullen silence—silence that gradually broke into a roar of disapproval, a shout of "Libertà!" By the time Orsini and the soldiers came, Piero was glad of their assistance, not to quell the disaffected Florentines, but to escape from a town in open mutiny. They left the women behind in the great house in Via Larga, and, accompanied by a few cavaliers, the three young Medici fled from their city. Piero rode in the middle, disguised as a monk. It was the second time in fourteen days that he had secretly escaped from Florence.

When the sun rose on the 10th of November, Florence was in deed, as well as in name, a republic. Piero was a fugitive in reproachful Bologna, a price of 5,000 ducats on his head. Nor ever again, in the ten remaining years of his life, did he re-enter Florence; and when his brothers, seventeen years after, were readmitted to their ancient home, it was through the blood of Prato that they waded into Florence.

Florence would brave any danger rather than receive the Medici. When King Charles, a few days after the escape of Piero, made a brave stand for his guest of Sarzana, the Florentines threatened him with open war. "You can sound your trumpets," said Piero Capponi; "I will ring my bells." Charles looked out of the window at the narrow streets, at the solemn, strong-walled city that, at the sound of the tocsin, became a mysterious and terrible ambush, raining death from every window, shooting unsuspected sallies along the tortuous streets. He under-

stood that a plain French soldier could not deal with such an enemy as this. "Take off the price upon his head," he declared, "and I will say no more."

Nevertheless, had Piero gone at once to Charles instead of to Bologna, the King might have forced him back on Florence. But the young man fled from Bologna to Venice; and when King Charles sent him a message and bade him come to his camp, Piero refused to stir. Piero Capponi, he said, had told him the French King meant only to betray him. Piero Capponi was at least resolved that his namesake should no more betray the city, and by his persuasions the Medicean Piero remained at Venice. "There I often saw him," wrote Commines, "and he discoursed to me at large of all his misfortunes, and I, as well as I could, comforted him. Methought him a man of no great stuff or sense."

The French at Pisa.

In the eleventh century the King of Tunis asked of the Pisan merchants at his Court: "What are the Florentines?" "They are our Arabs of the desert," replied those prosperous tradesmen. "They are our poor!"

But in the next century these Arabs of Tuscany proved themselves formidable rivals to their neighbours; though for another hundred years Pisa, with diminishing resources, retained a superior prestige. That superiority of hers became the occasion of her final ruin; for in 1197 when Volterra, Lucca, Florence, San Miniato, Arezzo, and Siena united in the Great Guelf League of Independence, Pisa alone stood out resolutely Ghibelline, isolated in the dignity of her Imperialism. This abstention of Pisa, then the first of the Tuscan cities, gave to Florence the front place in the League, and made her the head of the Guelfs in Central Italy.

Thenceforth, for centuries Florence gloriously flourished, while the fame of Pisa dwindled to a mere proverb, an old tale but half believed. First she lost her supremacy, then her wealth, then her

renown, and at last her independence. A family of despots arose in her midst. Soon she was to regret this comparative liberty, for in 1397 Giangaleazzo Visconti conquered the city, and left it, on his death in 1402, to his mistress, Agnese Mantegazza, and to their son, Gabriello Maria Visconti. But Messer Gabriel' Maria was not strong enough to keep Pisa single handed against his envious neighbours of Florence, Genoa, and Lucca; so on April 15, 1404, he agreed to hold the city as a fief of France.

I.

Few of the details of history are more involved, perplexed, or dependent on the revelations of unpublished archives than the delicate intrigues of France for the possession of Pisa. A Mediterannean seaport, a link in the precious chain that ran (Marseilles, Genoa, Pisa, Naples) from Provence to Sicily, she was an invaluable supporter of the Angevines in the south; and holding the passes of the Apennines, she was scarcely less necessary to Orleans in Lombardy, glad indeed of an ally among the Tuscan republics, so irreconcilably inimical to the Visconti. But, as we have already seen, the plans of Orleans were liable to suffer from the counter plans of France; and as at Genoa in 1395 so it was at Pisa in 1404.

The great Visconti died in September, 1402; and in the same year Marshal Boucicaut was sent as Governor to Genoa. Boucicaut was an enemy of Milan,* a

* On October 30, 1403, he wrote to Florence and offered to take one of the finest cities of the Milanese between Milan and Piedmont if Florence would afford him (as indeed she offered

hater of the Turk, a man who saw in the Visconti the secret allies of the Sultan, a man who had been a captive at Nicopolis. A pure, devoted, honourable spirit, yet officious, yet impatient:—a restless hero working persistently in a nervous and unquiet fashion the thing that he believed to be the Will of God—Boucicaut is a figure as unusual among the factions and intrigues of fifteenth-century history as Gordon among the small surroundings of to-day. The Marshal was sent to Genoa because that jealous and unaccountable people ("qui n'aime pas qu'on aille leur desbauscher leurs femmes") would no longer endure his predecessor. They found in him the man they had prayed to have, a sterner master. Boucicaut was as rigid as he was simple: a man soon deceived, but swift and inflexible in the punishment of treachery. His immaculate life, his proved authority, his skill in regulating and organizing commercial traffic, gave him a great position in Northern Italy, made him the man of men there, the central figure, even as before him had been Giangaleazzo Visconti. For one reason, these two men, so unlike in every detail, were alike in the great fact that they were thinkers, men with a mission, inspired by an idea that ruled their lives and to which they subordinated every consideration. The Duke of Milan dreamed of a great United Italian Confederation, of which he should be the head, and of which the Pope should be merely the ornament and crown: his dream was the dream of the

to do) an aid of 200 lances (Florence Archives, Filza II. dei Dieci 3). Nothing appears to have come of this arrangement, which appears to have been quite uncountenanced by the King.

Emperor Napoleon III. Boucicaut, a crusader by nature and tradition, above all things a religious spirit, dreamed of ending the Schism, of gaining state after state to the adherence of the true Pope at Avignon, and, *pari passu*, of extending the dominions of his lord the King of France. The ambition of Boucicaut was all spiritual loyalty and feudal devotion; the ambition of Visconti, stained with crimes, was directed only to self-aggrandizement: different stars were theirs, shining from different poles. But the men who see a star and follow where it leads them, though they go as far apart as Hell and Heaven, have more in common than the mere human bond which ties them to the obscure multitude of their fellows, swaying hither and thither, devoid of purpose, will, or way.

Almost the first act of Boucicaut at Genoa was to write to Florence inviting her to assist him in capturing from the young Visconti (the Serpent-brood) one of the finest cities between Milan and Piedmont. The Florentines shared to the full the distrust of Boucicaut for the children of him whom they had called "the self-dubbed Count of Virtues (Vertus), the veritable Count of Vice." And they consented to the enterprise, but yet did not pursue it. For, at that moment, they had other work to hand. There was another Visconti than the Lords of Milan and Padua whom they must subdue. They were laying siege to Pisa "e chi la tiene": her master Gabriel' Maria Visconti.

At the same moment, as we know, Orleans beyond the Alps was mysteriously advancing southwards; his aim, no less than that of the Florentines, the

reduction of Pisa. For through his wife, Valentine Visconti,* he had, as he considered, a prior claim on Pisa, and indeed on all possessions of the dead Duke not included in the heritage of the two legitimate sons. Gabriel' Maria, the bastard, supported only by his mother, besieged by the Florentine allies of France, threatened by his brother-in-law the puissant brother of the King of France,—what hope had he? None indeed, save in the disquiet which the news of Orleans' coming might inspire among his neighbours. For was it only on Pisa intent that so great a lord was advancing on Lombardy? At this moment the young Visconti of Milan were at open war with Boucicaut, and had declared their intention to drive him out of Genoa and to obtain for themselves the rich province of which the French had baulked their father. Did Orleans also remember with rancour that disappointment of ten years ago? Did he intend to join his brothers-in-law of Milan, take Genoa first and Pisa afterwards? It might be; and yet it were difficult to be at once the ally of the Milanese Visconti, and the usurper of their half-brother's possessions. Was it possible that the King's brother intended to unite his army to that of the King's lieutenant, defeat the young Visconti before Genoa, drive them from Lombardy as well as out of Pisa, and make for himself a great territory (Milan, Asti, Pisa) alongside of the French protectorate of Genoa? Boucicaut was an ancient and intimate companion of the Duke of Orleans; it was rumoured that Orleans had frequent interviews with Pope Benedict

* See the preceding chapter on Valentine Visconti.

at Beaucaire; it was possible that the three had come to an understanding.

And Orleans marched south. And Florence assailed Pisa. So late as April 17, 1404,* the Florentines believed that by diplomacy, if not by force, they might secure their prey. But in the end of February or the beginning of March the Duke of Orleans turned north

* See a manuscript letter, I believe unprinted, in the Florence Archives, Dieci di Balia, Classe x. dist. iii. No. 2, f°. 56: *Istruzione data a Pierotto Fidini:* "Andrai a Pisa e sarai con Madonna Agnese e dicele che tu ciai (ci hai) referito quello chella ta detta (ch'ella ti ha detta) e, uditolo, noi siamo contenti seguitare il ragionemento, cioè di contrarre con lei buona pace e sicura si che tra lei e noi non abbia da essere guerra. Ma che, per fare contento il nostro popolo, e mostrargli come cosa sia sicura che guerra non gli fia fatta a noi, è bisogno chella metta nelle mani del Comune nostro quatro Castella colle loro forteze, di quelle del Terreno di Pisa che per noi si nomineranno et vogliendo ella fare questo noi verremo alla pace e alla concordia realmente.

"Se ella dinegasse questo volere fare, avendo tu prima provato e riprovato chella il consento, et ella dicesse di volere mettere le dette castelle colle forteze loro in mano di terza persona fidata a lei ed a noi, dirai in ultimo che noi siamo contenti. E se questo ella non movesse a te ma stessesi pure in su la negativa—di non ci volere dare le dette castella—allora moverai tu a lei dicendo che, poi che non le dia piacere mettere le dette castella nelle mani nostre, chella le metta nelle mani di terza persona di lei e di noi fidata. E che a questo ella consente e volere che tu nommassi le castella, dirai Livorno, Librafacta, Casena e Ponteacra. E se d'alcuni di questi ell dicesse non potere fare, saprai quali. E in scambio loro dirai Palaia e Marti se fossino più d'uno. Se ella ti venisse a domandare chi noi porremo per terza persona, dirai che tu non ne sei informato ma che tu ci lo riferirai, e se ella te ne nominasse alcuno, tiengli a mente. E poi ne vieni subito alla presentia nostra, bene informato d'ogni cosa. Et eziandio d'ogni novettà e cosa che sentire puoi" (April 17, 1404).

in high dudgeon, indignantly marching on Paris. And in April it was commonly known that, on the 4th of that month, Messer Gabriel' Maria Visconti had been acknowledged a vassal of the Crown of France; he was "homme du Roy" and the King's men henceforth would support him in Pisa.

Great was the wrath of Orleans, loud the remonstrance of Florence. Orleans had scarcely arrived in Paris before the King transferred to him all the Royal rights to Pisa (as I have already shown the reader in the chapter on Valentine Visconti), and formally disowned the conduct of Boucicaut, forbidding him in future to put any obstacle in the path of his brother. Censured at home, Boucicaut was not less fervently condemned by his allies in Italy. The Signory of Florence addressed a most indignant letter to him,*

* Dieci di Balia, Classe x. distinzione iii. No. 2, f°. 58. I translate the whole of this interesting letter, hitherto, I believe, unpublished:

"*Istruzione data a Bonaccorso di Neri Pitti . . . di quello che abbia fare a Genova.* April 28, 1404: Andrai a Genova. E sarai al Governatore Messer Giovanni Bouciquaut, Luogo tenente del Re. E lui saluterai affetuosamente per parte del Comune nostro.

"Di poi gli dirai come di questo mese egli manda al nostro comune suo Ambasciatore Maestro Piero di Nantrone, suo secretario. Il quale, per sua parte, ci notifica come egli aveva ricevuto per vasallo e feudatorio del serenissimo Re di Francia Messer Gabriello Maria di Visconti colla città di Pisa e col suo terreno che possedea. Et aveva presa la sua difesa. E che darà per censo al detto Re ogni anno uno cavallo e uno falcone pellegrino. Secondaria, ci prega che ci piacesse per lo avvenire non offendere la citta nil (ne il) terreno di Pisa predetto, per rispetto del Serenessimo Re predetto. Et agli aveva preveduto che di quelli di Pisa non sarebbe fatta alcuna offesa nel nostro terreno.

accusing him of a dishonest action in seizing from the King's faithful allies the prey they had hunted so

"Tertio disse che noi possiamo colle nostre mercatantie usare et trafficare a Pisa sicuramente come a Genova e in qualunque altra terra del Re di Francia.

"Al quale Ambasciatore fu risposto in effecto che noi ci maravigliamo et dolevamo, come essendo noi in guerra colla dicta città di Pisa e con chi la teneva—et essendo noi al disopra per liberare la detta città di tirannia et avendo rispetto quanto noi siamo sempre frati, e siamo servidori della detta Corona di Francia; et egli aveva presa la difesa loro contro a noi; e che questa non era honesta cosa.

"Alla seconda parte—di non offender—egli fu detto, che in ciò noi terremo tali modi come vedessimo convenirsi e che non gli darebbero dispiacere.

"E alla terza parte, diciamo che l'usare in luogo dove avesse a fare alcuno dei Visconti di Milano non ci fu mai sicuro, non potrebbe essere, considerati le inimicitii e odii antichi stati da detti Visconti al comune nostro; Conchiudendo che sopra le dette cose noi faremo risposta più pienamente al detto Signor Boucequaut per nostri Ambassadori.

"E poi gli direte che—se mai noi avevamo maraviglia di alcuna cosa—noi abbiamo dello avere gli, in nome del Serenissimo Re di Francia, presa la difesa di Pisa e di quello che gli possiede, contro a noi, figludi devotissimi della corona di Francia stati sempre, in favore dei Pisani che sempre sono stati inimici della detta Corona. Et maximamente essendo noi in guerra con Pisa e con chi la tiene, non di nascosa ma pubblicamente e non di guerra hora cominciata ma durata lungamente. Et essendo noi con nostro esercito in punto et in ordine per esser intorno alla città di Pisa, sperando in brevissimo tempo liberarla della Tirannia dei Visconti. E per poter meglio e con maggiore forza cosa fare, abbiamo fatta grandissima spesa nello apparecchio di questo, il quale possiamo dire per cagione sua avere tutta perduta. E con lui di questo vi direste amichevolmente, subiungnendo che noi ci rendiamo certi che quando il Serenissimo Re di Francia e suo Consiglio sapranno questo, essi n'avranno dispiacere come di cosa non honesta et iniusta. Il che non fu mia usanza della Corona di Francia fare, et come di cosa fatta contro

long, now, in their very grasp, to be wrested from them by a friend. "Questa non era honesta cosa."

a i suoi figluoli e divoti in favore di un Tiranetto e d'una città stata sempre nemica della Corona di Francia. A presso gli direte, che, per riverentia della Maestà Reale la quale egli rappresenta (come che duro e malagevole ci paresse per le ragioni di sopra assegante) già sono più dì passati, noi facciamo commandamento a tutta nostra gente d'arme e subditi: Che nel terreno di Pisa non dovessono fare alcuna offesa o cavalcata, e così è stata observata: la qual cosa fare grava molto il nostro popolo per gli rispetti scripti di sopra. E mai non si sarebbe creduto per nessuno Fiorentino che Messer Bouciquaut il quale abbiamo reputato a noi e reputiamo amico singolarissimo avesse mai fatta tale cosa contra a noi ma pensiamo che questo sia proceduto da altri con velati colori che gli le hanno dato a dividere; ma veramente questo che fatta ha non è cosa punto honesta ne iusta ne utile ne honorevole per la Maestà Reale. E per tutto il pregherate che gli piaccia, veduta la verità del fatto, renonciare questo che ha ordinato in questa materia, ed essere contento che noi possiamo seguitare contro a Pisa, e chi la tiene, la nostra impresa. E questo sarà a lui honore et a noi, figluoli della Corona, singolarissimo piacere.

"Alla parte del trafficare et usare a Pisa i nostri cittadini e mercatanti colle loro mercatantie, direte che niuno cittadino se ne fiderebbe mai ne vorebbero trafficare, essendo Pisa nella mani d'alcuno dei Visconti, come ella è. E non che ivi—ma in alcuna terra dove alcuno dei Visconti avesse a fare, per che essi sono antichi nostri nemici e molte volte lanno (l'hanno) dimostrato—e romperci la fede e pace e tregua; e bene lo vedevamo dove, essendo colligati colla Serenissima Corona di Francia, il Conte di Vertus ci ruppe la Pace e manifestò tradimento contra Dio a vergogna della detta Corona, si che in modo alcuno non ci potremo mai fidare in luogo done alcuno di loro avesse a fare."

Here the document leaves politics to defend the quarrel of private Florentine merchants in Genoa, to complain of the conduct of the Pisans who have made a raid on to the lands of Messer Gherardo d'Appiano, feudatory of Florence, and to complain of the sequestration of the goods of certain Florentine mer-

The Florentines could easily have reduced Pisa, but against the fief of France, their ally, they could do nothing. They withdrew from the siege, protesting and with many murmurs.

What indeed was the motive of Boucicaut? The Florentines with some reason suspected an unseen hand pulling the strings that worked this sudden action; "pensiamo che questo sia proceduto da altri, con velati colori." But what man save the King, who disowned the business, was strong enough to dare to oppose the will of Orleans? Was Burgundy jealous of those Italian prospects of his rival which freed him from his neighbourhood at home? Or was it possible that the Antipope Benedict, ill-contented with Orleans after their interview at Beaucaire, had privately summoned Boucicaut "ce bon Chrestien" to hold Pisa in the King's name and not in the name of his too powerful guardian? Mysteries! It is as likely, perhaps more likely, that Boucicaut, ever hot-headed, wilful, and officious, asked no permission save his own to accept this new vassal for the King of France. His brain was fired by the thought of converting Pisa to the true obedience; and he feared that she would fall to heretic Florence ere Orleans could pass the Alps.

Gabriel' Maria Visconti and his mother were ill at their ease in Pisa. He, an elegant, faithless, persuasive *Tiranetto* (as the Tuscans called him), was often at

chants of Genoa. The Ten also state that they are sending Messer Rinaldo Gianfigliazzi and Messer Filippo Cosimi on an embassy to France to state their case to the King. F°. 60 instructs us that Boucicaut liberated the sequestered goods and that a truce was signed between Florence and Pisa for so long as Pisa should continue subject to the King of France.

the Court of Boucicaut, making various negotiations, among others handing over the Tower and Fort of Leghorn to France.* Boucicaut was in high spirits notwithstanding his half disgrace; he had persuaded the Genoese to accept the authority of Benedict XII., "the greatest deed," writes his biographer, "that has been done in Italy these 200 years." He hoped soon to convert Leghorn and Pisa; and, in time, to induce Italy to renounce the heinous Italian Antipope.

Suddenly his hold over Pisa ominously slackened.

The Pisans cared little for Pope or Antipope; they were fanatic for liberty. They detested Agnese Mantegazza and her bastard with a Tuscan hatred for the Visconti, treacherous alike to God and man. One day in 1405, while Messer Gabriel' Maria was absent in Genoa, some Florentine soldiers made a raid on Pisa. The citizens, not without reason, suspected their tyrant of selling them to the Florentines,—old neighbours and rivals yet more odious than the Milanese. They rose as one man fighting for death or liberty in

*Brit. Museum MSS. 30, 669, f. 238; a treaty between the King of France and G. M. Visconti, Lord of Pisa. The Tower and Fort of Leghorn are to be given to the French, the King promising that no one shall be allowed to enter Leghorn against the will of Gabriele Maria Visconti. Also *quod absit* should the Castle of Leghorn be taken by the enemies of the said Gabriele Maria, or should it in any way rebel against him, the King and his Lieutenant bind themselves to allow free passage to any army the said Gabriele Maria may send for its subjection. The King explicitly promises that if any of Gabriele Maria's possessions be lost by the treachery of guards or other means, he will make war upon the fradulent possessors and attempt their recovery. The King invests Gabriele Maria, with a gold ring, in all his possessions save the Tower and Fort of Leghorn.

the streets. No sooner had they driven back the Florentines than they rushed on the Fortress, surging through the narrow corridors, till, in the heart of the palace, they came on Madonna Agnese. A man raised his harquebuss and shot her through the heart. Her son was absent in Genoa. For the moment the Pisans were quit of the Visconti.

The news of the revolt of Pisa flew swiftly to Genoa. The bereaved Tiranetto dispossessed and orphaned, repaired to Boucicaut as to the Lieutenant of his liege-lord, the King of France, asking aid because, as the Chronicle reminds us, "seigneur doibt au besoing secourir son vassal qui le requiert à son aide."

Boucicaut was dismayed at this first result of his new acquisition. To reduce Pisa by arms would be a ruinous affair. The Marshal comforted as best he could the vassal of his master, and promised to go and reason with the rebels. Forth, therefore, he went from Genoa to a very beautiful place called Porto Venere, in the neighbourhood of Pisa. There a deputation of the insurgents awaited him, and for a long while he harangued them as to the virtues of the dead Madonna Agnese and the merits of the kind and amiable young man whom they had banished.

The Pisans listened respectfully while "moult leur dict de belles paroles," but when the sermon was over they replied that never should Messer Gabriel' be their lord again, rather would every man of them be hewn in pieces; but, they went on to say, the Marshal Boucicaut himself should be welcomed and honoured by all the citizens of Pisa, if he would accept

her as his fief. "Never," cried the Marshal, "could I draw such a profit from a friend's misfortune" ("car ce n'est mie l'usaige des François d'user de tels tours"). And he fell again to praising Messer Gabriel', but all in vain, for the last word of the Pisans was that, if the Marshal himself would not accept the city for his own, then they prayed him to meet them at Leghorn another day, and there they would give themselves directly to the King of France, accepting a French governor for their waiter, even as the Genoese had done ten years before.

Boucicaut went home, sore perplexed between his duty to his liege and his duty to his vassal. He had gone to Porto Venere to plead the cause of Gabriel' Maria: and he had supplanted the young man, as it seemed. On the other hand, since it was clear that the Pisans would never re-admit their Tiranetto, and since the city was the fief of France, how could he honourably forbid them to give themselves entirely to their lawful suzerain? And the vision grew in him of a great Mediterranean State, French, supporting French interests in the East—a terror to the Saracens and the men of Barbary, a lamp of Christendom, faithful to the True Obedience, reclaimed for ever from the heresy of the Elect of Rome.

Arrived in Genoa he sent for Messer Gabriel', and told him the case; "de quoy feult moult dolent Messire Gabriel," who doubtless wished that he had sent to Porto Venere, a spokesman less eloquent and less engaging. But Boucicaut persuaded him that since he could not hope to leave the city for himself, 'twas better to entrust it to the King of France—who would

recompense so generous a vassal with lands as good elsewhere—than to let it fall into the power of an enemy or a neighbour. Gabriel' Maria agreed—as he must perforce agree—and Boucicaut set out again to meet the rebels at Leghorn.

But the Pisans had never meant to give themselves another master. To gain time, they had played with Boucicaut and had flattered his weak side. They said that on second thoughts they preferred that, before they gave themselves to the King of France, the men of Messer Gabriel', who were still in the strong places of Pisa, should be expelled the city, and a garrison of French and Genoese sent thither in their stead. The request appeared the less unreasonable as Gabriel' Maria was himself the King's vassal, and the Pisans might suspect that their mutual suzerain would only confirm the power of the rejected *Tiranetto*. Boucicaut agreed, returned to Genoa, and arranged for the exchange of garrisons.

This done the Pisans sent to say the Fortress needed revictualling. Boucicaut, eager to ingratiate his new subjects, despatched his nephew, some gentlemen of his household, with many gentlemen and citizens of Genoa; and a great galley heaped with provisions. The ship sailed down the coast and up the Arno into Pisa; at the quay the embassy descended. They were immediately overpowered by an ambush of Pisans, who seized upon the welcome cargo of the ship, and carried off the crew and the passengers into a dark and villainous prison, using their sufferings as a means to extract higher ransom from the King's Lieutenant.

Thus amply provisioned at Boucicaut's expense, the

Pisans began to feel secure of liberty. They sent to Florence, offering her four of their castles if she would help them to regain Leghorn, where at the moment Boucicaut and Gabriel' Maria were esconced, and to revenge themselves on both these men. But the Florentines returned a dilatory answer, for they were, in truth, pursuing a more fruitful negotiation.

Florence in 1405 was in the very hey-day of her wool trade, but she had no outlet for her tides of commerce, no port from which to ship her goods to Provence or to Barbary. It was not four Pisan castles, but Pisa herself and the mouth of the Arno that she required. At the same time that the Pisans proposed their bargain to the Florentine Ten, that august body had received an ambassador from Gabriel' Maria Visconti offering to sell them not only Pisa, but also the frontier castles of Sarzana and Librafatto, which, from the fastnesses of the Apennines, guard the plain in which Pisa and Florence lie. It was worth a great price to secure not only a port, but a fortified frontier in case of an invasion from the north. Florence remembered her ancient terrors when she had lain almost at the mercy of the Duke of Milan. She agreed to pay Messer Gabriel' the sum of four hundred thousand florins for his rights over his revolted signory. They stipulated, however, that Boucicaut must be acquainted with the transaction, and give it his sanction, otherwise no bargain.

When the persuasive Gabriel' Maria broke the news to his host, at first the Marshal "qui toujours y avoit la dent," emphatically refused to consent to the aliena-

tion of a Royal fief; he even sent to Pisa to acquaint the rebels with the designs of their ex-tyrant, hoping by this means to induce them to declare themselves the subjects of the King. But the Pisans went on shouting "Libertà." Meanwhile Gabriel' Maria and the Florentines set the matter before the Marshal in another light. For Messer Gabriel'—a clever person—advised the Florentines to become vassals to the Crown of France for the fief of Pisa. The Florentines fell in with the suggestion, which carried visible weight with the Boucicaut. And the Marshal was left to consider the matter.

The Florentines asked Leghorn as well as Pisa, but Boucicaut was obstinate in his hold on the nearer port. He could not yield Leghorn without grave prejudice to Genoa. But Pisa was his only in name. Could he not keep Leghorn, the substance, and as the price of Pisa, the shadow, exact the fealty of the Florentines to France and to the true Pope? Illuminated by this bright idea Boucicaut proposed the following terms to Florence:

1. The Florentines shall have Pisa and all its lands except the Castle of Leghorn; but they must swear not to interfere with the carrying trade of Genoa, nor to make traffic by sea in any other ships than those of Genoa.

2. A month after the reduction of Pisa the Florentines must declare their adhesion to Pope Benedict XIII., and charge themselves with the conversion of Pisa.

3. If, six months after the said reduction of Pisa, the Elect of Rome still persist in his error, the Floren-

tines, the French, and the Genoese shall all make war on him together. *

4. That the ratification of King and Council shall be asked for this agreement.

The Florentines agreed, and messengers were despatched to France, where there was great joy in Council at thus receiving two Signories for one. The King confirmed the agreement (it is said) by letters-patent, which were sent to Genoa and Florence. The Ten paid certain sums (as we learn from a later letter), to Gabriel' Maria, and other moneys to Boucicaut; and then in earnest the Florentines resumed the siege of Pisa.

Famine fought with them and pestilence; yet valiant Pisa proved irreductible. Month after month sped on in fruitless heroism, and a year after the resumption of the siege the Florentines were still indefatigably attacking, the Pisans heroically defending. Then the beleaguered city sent by privy ways a messenger to Ladislas, King of Naples, offering herself to him if he would defend her. The King promised, but did nothing.

After a month or so the Pisans smuggled out a second messenger, this time to France, who offered the

* So far I have no documentary evidence for these articles, which are to be found in the "Livre des faicts du Marischal Boucicaut," part iii. chap. 10. I give them and I believe in them, because in every instance I have found the documents of Archives to confirm or explain the assertions of this particular chronicle; because the articles breathe the very spirit of Boucicaut; and because I think it is to this agreement that the Florentines refer in the letter quoted further on (Spoglio del Carteggio i. ii. fo. 221), under date 15th of August, 1406. The act by which the Florentines constitute themselves vassals of France for Pisa is well known. It is printed in Dumont.

city to the Duke of Burgundy on the same terms. Mindful of the agreement of last year which assigned Pisa to Florence, Burgundy hesitated; and, perceiving his perplexity, the Pisan envoys "qui assez sçavoient le tour de leur baston," addressed themselves to certain of the Councillors of Orlèans, and promised the city to him; whereupon the said Councillors induced Orleans and Burgundy, enemies as they were, to go hand in hand to the poor bewildered King and beseech him to grant them leave to accept the homage of Pisa. Charles, doubtless, was not quite in his right mind. The deed granting Pisa to Burgundy and Orleans * is signed "For the King" by the Count of Tancarville and other princes. An ancient dependence upon Burgundy, a blind affection for Orleans ("rien n'eut refusé à son frère"), united with his

* "Arch. Nat., Paris, Carton K. 55, No. 11, prèce 8; July 27, 1406: "Charles par la Grâce de Dieu Roy de France, à nos amés et féaulx gens de nos comptes et trésoriers à Paris et à tous nos aultres justiciers et officiers ou à leur lieutenant, Salut et dilectation!

"Savoir vous faisons que nos très-chers et très-amés frère et cousin les Ducs d'Orléans et de Bourgoigne, nous ont au jour dit fait foy et hommaige lige des ville terre et Seigneurie de Pise et de toutes terres appartenans et appendans quelconque, à eulx appartenir communément. Auquel hommaige nous les avons reçus sauf notre droit et l'autrui. Vous mandons, et à chacuns de vous sicomme à luy appartiendra que, pour cause du dit hommaige à nous faict, vous ne faictes ou souffrey nos ditz frère et cousin ne aulcun d'eulx estre molestez, troublez ou empeschez ès dictes ville terre el seigneurie de Pise ni es terres appartenans et appendans en aucune manière. Mais si pour la dicte cause elles estoient empeschées mettez les leur ou faictes mettre a plaine delivrance. Donné a Paris le 26 jour de Juillet, 1406, et de nostre regne 26. Pour le Roy, le Comte de Tancarville et aultres princes."

perplexed and feeble memory, to obliterate the treaty of last year. The King forgot his new vassals, forgot the Pope, the schemes of Boucicaut, the money that had been paid him by the Florentines on account of the agreement. He granted Pisa to Burgundy and Orleans, who wrote to the Florentines that they must raise the siege at once, and sent to Boucicaut bidding him assist the Pisans.

The previous difficulties of Boucicaut had been as nothing compared to this dilemma. How could he refuse his service to the King, his lord and suzerain? How, on the other hand, could he break his plighted word? The vassal and the man of honour struggled together in his breast; and from that long and cruel duel the man of honour emerged triumphant. So Boucicaut refused to desert his Florentine allies, refused to assist the Royal fief of Pisa.

As the Florentines pressed closer and closer round the beleaguered city, the Pisans for the third time contrived to smuggle out a messenger who was to make his way as best he could to Asti (the city of Orleans), and thence to France to beseech the King to send a messenger and reinforcements.* But the Pisan envoy was discovered in the Florentine camp, and Capponi, the General, drowned him in the sea.

So that when the news of his interception came to Paris, it was too late for aught but indignation. "The Florentine merchants had to suffer for it," says Corio; and Desjardins (in his introduction to the Tuscan Statipassers), expresses his astonishment at the obstacles laid in the way of Florentine trade by Mar-

* Corio.

shal Boucicaut that year. For human nature is not consistent, and though Boucicaut had indignantly refused to desert his allies of Florence, none the less he was wrath at their success, which meant the injury of France.

For on the 10th of October, 1406,* a Florentine army marched into Pisa, garrisoned the citadels, established their government, and marched back with many hostages to Florence. Pisa was honourably lost to France.† Pisa was lost, and great was the sting and smart of it. Railing and bitter names flung at Boucicaut, detention of the Florentine Ambassadors by Orleans ‡ wrath of the King himself, were each

* "Filza xxii. della Signoria": see f°. 283, Spoglio del Carteggio, October 10, 1406, a Florentine army enters Pisa: "La città di Pisa si rende al comune di Firenze: l'esercito vi entra vittorioso nel dì senza commettere alcune violenza e prende il possesso di tutte le Fortezze." On the 14th of October a certain number of Pisans were sent as hostages into Florence; arms of offence and defence were taken from all the Pisans. On the 12th of November a further number of hostages to the amount of one hundred of the Pisan citizens, "dei più atti alle fazioni," were ordered to be sent into Florence. Civil order was established under the government of a Magistrate and eight Priors.

† "Spoglio del Carteggio," i. ii., f°. 221 (Filza xx. della Signoria), 15th of August, 1406: "Lettera della Signoria responsiva a quella del Re di Francia in commendazione dei Pisani ai quali si annunciava di aver' data un Signore. *Si lamenta la Signoria di questa procedere dopo che l'acquisto di quella città fatto della Signoria per compta era stato confermato del Re con figlio e già erano state pagate diverse somme a Gabriel' Maria Visconti e a Giovanni Le Meingre* (Boucicaut) *Luogotenente Generale della Corona e Governatone di Genova.*" A replica of this is sent to Orleans, Burgundy, and Berry.

‡ There are a number of documents concerning this detention of the Florentine Ambassadors to be found: "Signori Cart. Miss."

and all wholly unavailing. Florence was the King's ally and too great a power to be rashly assailed ; and Florence was firm in Pisa.

Had Orleans lived, he might indeed have undertaken an expedition into Italy. But in the middle of his disappointment he was murdered as we know. Messer Gabriel' Maria went to Milan, where he lived half a captive,* half a traitor for some while ; and then took refuge again in Genoa. But in the year 1409 being detected by Boucicaut in a plot of singular treachery against the French, he was ruthlessly

Reg. l. Cancelleria 27, f°. 26 *et seq.*, in the Florence Archives, under dates 10th of May, 3rd of June, 25th of June, 11th of July. The letters are too long to publish here, see also "Spoglio del Carteggio," fo. 286, for summary of an embassy sent by the Signory to the King of France, Orleans, and Burgundy, in justification of the purchase of Pisa and the siege. The Ambassadors "erano stati spogliati e ritenuti dal Duca d'Orliens, per el che, seguito l'acquisto della detta città, si spedisce ivi Bonaccorso Pitti." Pitti was to join Alberto degli Albizzi already in France, and, going by Avignon, they were to interview the Antipope, to treat of the union of the Church, to expound to him the policy of the Republic, and to obtain from him commendatory letters to the Court at France. But the Antipope was a less formidable ally than in the days of Clement.

It is curious to observe that the Signory instruct their ambassadors, if they cannot obtain from the King the liberation of the imprisoned Ambassadors, to appeal finally to the Parliament. This is assuming that the Parliament was stronger than the King or even than Orleans—a piece of trans-Alpine provincialism.

* "Archives of Florence: Spoglio del Carteggio universale della Repubblica Fiorentina dell' anno, 1401-1426," tome 2, f°. 273: "Ricuse la Signoria di pagare la rata dovuta a Gabriel' Maria Visconti, non essendo egli in sua libertà, ma in poter' del Duca di Milano, che serbava convertire il denaro in suo servigio." *Vide* Filza II de' Dieci," f°. 170. June, 1406.

beheaded. Three years later, in 1412, after Gabriele's death that plot succeeded. Boucicaut and the French were expelled from Genoa; and the wars of Burgundy and Armagnac, the woes of Agincourt and the long invasion of the English, for thirty years diverted the French from their endeavours to colonize beyond the Alps.

II.

The Florentine conquest was the beginning of ninety years of slavery for Pisa—a terrible slavery, heavy with exaggerated imports, bitter with the tolerated plunder of private Florentines, humiliating with continual espionage. Ruin fell upon the lovely city; and as the waters of the sea crept slowly back over the reclaimed Maremma, they sapped the foundations of her fairest palaces. Malaria and decay went hand in hand along the streets; though round the ruined town, the only whole thing there, the strong forts of Florence, proclaimed the wealth and power of the oppressor. It was not that the Florentines were avaricious; they spent abundantly and lavishly on fortifications and garrisons for their soldiers; on a university in Pisa for their sons; and they paid the most imaginative of living Florentine painters to put his frescoes on the walls of the Pisan Campo Santo. But they spent their money in the Master's way, declaring and sustaining the glory of Florence rather than alleviating the miseries of Pisa. And the Pisans themselves were unable either to supply the omissions of Florence, or to direct and advise a more efficient expenditure. They had de-

scended into a nation of poor artizans, for all their ancient trades were now forbidden to them. Florence had secured the first place for her own manufactures, by absolutely prohibiting the wool-weaving, silk-spinning, ship-building, in which the Pisans had for so many centuries excelled. Moreover no Pisan might barter merchandise by land or sea. Restricted to the commonest handicrafts, they lost the resource of wealth; deprived of public office, denied the most ordinary civil rights, they sank into a mute and long-enduring slavery, secretly nourishing a spark of flame in their rebellious hearts.

Pisa was the Ireland of Florence, captive and yet unvanquished. Ever ready to revolt, never for an hour forgetful of her antique superiority. By means of the many exiles that Florence expelled from home, she kept continually in touch with the enemies of Florence. Men expelled for private crimes—the meanest of the Pisans—turned patriots in exile and dedicated the best of their souls to the service of an unhappy country. The Florentines, prosperous and successful, were divided among themselves into half-a-dozen different factions; and patriotism for them meant largely a pious self-satisfaction dashed with party principles. But the magic of an unfortunate glory, the pathos that hangs over the place of one's birth when it has once been great and is fallen into ruin—this personal and omnipotent sentiment inspired every rank and every kind of Pisan. There was none of them that would have shrunk from any heroism, or (as it seemed to the Florentines) from any treachery, in order to reinstate his country in her ancient grandeur.

It was with Venice and with Milan that the Pisans held especial practice. It mattered little to them that at heart these two powers were deadly enemies; that ever since the death of Filippo Maria Visconti the Venetians had been plotting with Orleans to destroy the house of Sforza; that Lodovico il Moro left no chance unchallenged to limit the pretensions of his Adriatic rival. The Pisans were of neither party; their one political tenet was hatred of their conquerors, and (as a little later they declared) of the two, they preferred the Devil to the Florentines.

Such patience as theirs, ceaselessly labouring underground, never wearied, militant but not aggressive, does not fail to meet an opportunity. At last a favourable chance was offered to the Pisans. The King of France who in 1483 had disregarded the invitation of the Venetians, accepted, ten years later, the persuasions of Lodovico of Milan; and in the autumn of 1494, the armies of Charles VIII. poured into Italy.

It had been the custom of the Florentines, in times of war and danger, to call the heads of every Pisan household into Florence, as hostages for the good behaviour of their families and fellow citizens.

But in the autumn of 1494, Piero de' Medici who forgot everything, who had forgotten to garrison his frontier, forgot to call the Pisan hostages to Florence, although the French were steadily advancing on Tuscany and the Pisans eager to rebel. Every Pisan household was intact at home on that memorable 30th of October when, in the snowy camp of the French outside Sarzana, Piero de' Medici handed to

the King of France the keys of the Tuscan fortresses. It was of course provided that Charles should restore the cities to the Florentines on his return from Naples: but many things might happen in those troublous times that would outweigh the value of an oath. In the advent of King Charles, the Pisans found the opportunity, so long, so patiently, so ardently desired; and the French army and the hope of liberty entered the unhappy city hand in hand.

III.

It was the 8th of November, and a Sunday evening towards sunset, when the army of Charles VIII. arrived in Pisa. The slanting rays of the autumn sun lit up a brilliant spectacle, bathed in the soft aërial richness of the miraculously warm St. Martin's summer which, in 1494, succeeded to the rigours of the earlier months. Tired with their march across the wintry Apennines, the foreign soldiers found in Pisa a city full of friends. Tables were laid in the streets where all might sup on wine and meat and enjoy the hospitality of the city. Under foot the branches of pine and boughs of autumn roses exhaled their fresh aroma; and the ruined walls of the cracked and damp-stained palaces were hidden by the great squares of pale-crimson silk, gold brocade, and Turkey carpets that were hung from every window.

Along these altered streets, embellished for the festival, a train of priests, in stole and chasuble, carrying their holiest relics, went out to meet the

King. But this, the arranged and official feature of his reception, faded, on the event, into absolute unimportance. All took place at first as had been designed. The great motley travel-stained crowd of the French army came trampling down the boughs of pine and roses; the priests met the soldiers; and finally the King came riding on his great black horse, Savoy, under the blue-silk canopy sustained by the nobles of Pisa: but when the people caught sight of this little young man, with the large head, bright eyes, thin legs, high shoulders, and quaint amiable air of elfin ugliness, then they forgot the dignity of an official reception. This was the King of France! This was the all-potent power which, at different moments of history had stretched its invited and benevolent ægis over Asti, Genoa, Savona, nay, even over Naples and haughty Florence, to shelter them from the cruelty of a tyrannic neighbour. But instead of the dread magnificent symbolic monarch they had expected to behold, lo, a benevolent, rather grotesque little youth, with the most shining and enthusiastic eyes, a kind ugly face, engaging rather timid manners, and a total lack of that anti-human splendour which these enslaved republicans had expected in a king. A great wave of love, of anticipated gratitude swept through the hearts of all these people: he was, he must be, their hero, their deliverer. It was with tears of passion streaming down their cheeks that men, women, even little children, rushed into the ranks of the astonished soldiery, seeing round each weather-beaten face the shimmer of an aureole, pressing, hurrying, thronging towards the King—crying all together

in their sobbing voices "Libertate, Libertate!" while such as could master a word or two of French, stammered in their soft lisping Pisan accent, an appeal in the language of his distant country: "Liberté, liberté, cher Sire!" There was no affectation in this outburst of enthusiasm, nay, almost of idolatry. Any man who was stronger than Florence was a possible hero to the Pisans. The great motley army of Charles proved his force, and in the rugged amiable faces of master and of men the Pisans recognized the faculty of sympathy.

The Pisans had been to some extent prepared to find this virtue in the French by the correspondence of the Pisan exiles with Lodovico of Milan, whose trump-card was to secure if possible the liberation of Pisa by the French, and then, after their return to France, to offer himself as protector to the abandoned city. This plan was so well-contrived that, if only the first impulse were given, the machine must go on of itself; for the Pisans would certainly accept their liberty, if the French could be moved to grant it them; and, equally certainly, the French, after their return to France, could not afford to hold Pisa against not only Florence, but Milan, Venice, Genoa, and Lucca, who would none of them submit to hand a Mediterranean port to Charles. Lodovico was convinced that the Pisans would prefer the untried yoke of Milan to the hated bonds of Florence. The great thing was to give the first impulse.

To this end the Duke of Milan, when he had quitted the French camp the previous Tuesday, had left behind him Galeazzo di San Severino, the

brilliant young husband of his natural daughter. Galeazzo had instructions to do his utmost in every way to induce the French to protect the Pisans in a rebellion against Florence. He did not waste so excellent an opportunity. No sooner were Charles and his nobles in the Medici palace and the uncouth French soldiers housed like sons and brothers in the homes of Pisa, than the adroit young San Severinesco called a private council of the chief Pisan nobles. He advised them, as a son of Milan, and as a friend and well-wisher of their own, to throw themselves at once and utterly upon the generosity of France. This was a tempting counsel; yet there were some, and among them the warlike Giulio della Rovere, Cardinal of Saint Peter ad Vincula, that were for patience. "What shall we do when France has left the city?" they asked of one another. "Milan will protect you!" cried Messer Galeazzo, with a burst of inspiring confidence.

The Pisans hesitated only for a moment. From Venice or from Milan they had always hoped to gain their liberty at last, or at the least a change of masters. France, backed by Milan, seemed the most desirable deliverer: the ancient suzerain of the city supported by its latest friend. It was difficult at that moment to imagine a stronger conjunction in Italy; for in 1494 Charles was spoken of as the second Charlemagne, and no one ventured to set a bound to the triumphs of Lodovico of Milan. "All that he desires," the Venetian secretary was writing almost at this very time, "all that he desires, Fortune has conceded him, and all his plans come true." For

France and Milan to protect Pisa against the rest of Italy in 1494, was as if Russia and a stronger Servia to-day were to join their forces to secure Bulgaria against the anger of the other Balkan States.

Venice for a brief moment had sunk into the shade. She, who had manœuvred so deeply to unseat Arragon and Sforza by the help of France, beheld, to her immense chagrin, Charles VIII. following her own suggestions as to the enterprise of Naples with Lodovico Sforza as his mentor and ally. Milan had taken the place of Venice in the French Council; Milan, which the French should have conquered as their earliest prey. "It is extraordinary how that man succeeds," wrote Marin Sanuto. "Yet it may chance that he outwit himself at last. Please God, he come to a good end! But I for one do not believe it!"

At Pisa Lodovico registered a new success. It was in vain that Vincula (for the first time in his life, says Guicciardini, the author of quiet counsels) represented to the assembled nobles the danger of the step. They were beside themselves with the hope of liberty; and indeed, all the French agree in telling us that their condition was truly desperate. "Piteous, and lamentable," says Desrey, and Commines, a staunch Florentine in principle, allows that they were handled as cruelly as slaves. To men in such a plight, and counselled by a person so important as San Severino, no risk appears too great to run that leaves a chance for liberty.

And so that very night the Pisans, still in their gala-dresses, but with torn hair, faces of mourning, clasped hands and streaming eyes, thronged into the

council-chamber of the astonished King. "It was lamentable," writes an eye-witness," to hear them tell the wrongs and grievances they endured." It was as if, in the middle of their gala, one of them, with a significant irony, had raised the corner of the pale silk gala-hangings and had revealed the mouldering stone, the unsightly ruin underneath. As the Pisans exposed the real degradation of their slavery, the facile rash humanity of the French was touched to tears; and when Messer Simone Orlandi (an accomplished gentleman who could express himself in French) had finished his recital, it was not only the Pisans who, pale with indignation and with pity, turned to the King of France on the throne seated of Medici, and cried out to him, "Liberté, liberté, cher Sire!"

At this point an accomplished Legist, a Counsellor of the Parliament in Dauphiné, named Ribot, who also was a Master of Requests at Court, turned to the King and said: it was indeed a lamentable case, and that never, for sure, were any other men so hardly used as these. The King himself—touched to the heart, as were all these frank and simple Frenchmen, by the unsuspected misery beneath the gold brocades of this fantastic Italy, and not quite understanding (as Commines suggests) what it was the Pisans meant by this word Liberty—answered vaguely that he would be content they should enjoy it. This at least is the mild version of Commines, who was absent in Venice at the time; but Pierre Desrey, actually present at the scene, puts a stronger warrant in the mouth of Charles: "Il les assura de les conserver dans leurs franchises."

That night the Florentines in Pisa—men in office, judges, merchants, and soldiers of the garrison—were driven at the sword's point out of the rebellious city. The statue of Marzocco on the bridge was hurled in a thousand pieces into the muddy Arno; the standard of Florence was dragged and trampled in the mire; and bonfires until morning hailed the discomfiture of the King's allies. On the morrow after noon Charles left the city. He had placed a garrison of three hundred French soldiers in the new citadel; he had appointed three commissioners to superintend affairs; but he had taken no steps to impose the least restraint of civil order upon this impassioned and suddenly enfranchised people. Fortunately the nobles of the town took the matter into their wiser hands. Twenty-four hours after the entry of the French, Pisa was a free Republic governed by a Gonfalonier, six Priors, and a Balia of Ten, with a new militia of its own, and, for the first time in eight and eighty years, a Pisan garrison in the ancient citadel.

III.

If we ask, What right had the King of France to set at liberty the subjects of his allies, lent to him in his need as a temporary gage? we find the question difficult to answer. To statesmen like Commines or Briçonnet there was something shocking and dishonourable in the liberation of Pisa by the King, something that the tenderest palliation for generous youth and inexperience could not attempt to justify-

On the other hand, to fresh enthusiastic spirits, such as Ligny or the King himself, there was a degree of inhumanity in leaving the Pisans to their obvious slavery which no code of political honour could extenuate.

These two parties, and these two counsels, marched with the King out of Pisa into Empoli, where he slept that Monday night—doubtless in the same bad inn that had so poorly housed the adventurous Medici just fifteen nights ago. When, on the Tuesday, the King arrived at Signa he heard that the city of Florence was in revolt. Florence and Pisa, unknown to one another, had each regained their liberty upon the selfsame day. For when the King of France came in sight of the group of domes and towers along the Arno, his young guest at Sarzana, so recently the lord of all this beauty, was escaping to Bologna across the mountains in disguise with a price upon his head.

Charles, the pupil of the Duke of Milan, was not well inclined to Florence; and he was not propitiated by the fact that Piero de' Medici had been expelled the city on account of the great concessions he had made to France at the time of his fugitive visit to Sarzana. A month ago the King had declared that Piero alone was his enemy, and that the city was his friend; since the 30th of October he had changed his mind it was the pliant Medici who now appeared his friend, and his anger was against rebellious Florence.

Yet what had Florence done more audacious than that which Charles himself had sanctioned in the Pisans? Florence had expelled the Medici; Pisa the

Florentines, almost at the selfsame hour. But the fact that the Florentines condemned the loan of the fortresses hardened the heart of the King, conscious that by the liberation of the Pisans he had justified the greatest of their fears. This was, in fact, the direst harm with which an enemy could threaten Florence; and Charles had done it despite his name of friend. It was only natural that he should nourish a grievance against the ally whom he had injured; and when on the 17th of November the French entered Florence, it was remarked that the King rode through the streets, lance on thigh, with the bearing of an offended conqueror. His mind was as haughty as his mien, and he was prepared to claim from the Republic the independence of Pisa and the restoration of Piero to the chief place in the government.

But the Florentines were no less resolute than Charles. Capponi made his famous threat, and the King, after ten days of vain parade of force, swore a solemn treaty with the Florentines upon the 25th of the month. By the terms of this convention it was arranged that Pisa and Leghorn were to be left in the hands of the King till his return from Naples, and then given back to Florence; the King was to decide between Genoa and Florence as to the final disposal of Sarzana and Pietro Santa; the King was to say no more till March concerning the restoration of the Medici, when the Signory, if he desired, would reconsider the matter, and meanwhile, by Royal request, the price was taken off the tyrants' heads, and the wife and child of Piero were permitted to remain in Florence. The Signory agreed to pay the King, in

three terms, the sum of 120,000 ducats towards the expense of the campaign; but, for us, the most important proviso of this treaty (which the student may consult in the first volume of Desjardin's "Négociations") is one that secured a complete amnesty for Pisa. Moreover Florence promised, in favour of the King, to rule that city in the future with a more liberal and a gentler hand.

It was not three weeks since Charles had promised to maintain the Pisans in their liberty, and those unhappy patriots who could not penetrate (Commines declares that no Italian ever could) the shifting confusion of the Court, did not know, and would have little cared to understand, that Beaucaire and Ligny had held the balance yesterday, but Gannay, Gié, and Briçonnet to-day. The only consolation that they could have found in this unstability of favour was the chance that their advocates might soon again succeed to power, and as a fact they had made a great point in securing the sympathy of Ligny (the King's cousin) and Piennes—two young gentlemen of the King's own age who were his inseparable companions, wore armour like his own and the Royal colours. These two gallants counted on their side the Seneschal of Beaucaire, one of the King's two especial counsellors. But the other, Briçonnet, supported the Florentine party. The elder and more diplomatic statesmen, such as, Gié, Gannay, and Commines, were all on the side of Florence.

Such was the position of the Court when, in the January of 1495, the Pisans sent to Rome, as a last desperate advocate of their extremity, a gentleman of

their city, skilled in French, one Messer Burgundio Legolo, or Lolo as the slurring Pisan voices gave the name. The King received the ambassador graciously, but in the presence of the Florentine envoys; and the party of pity, and the party of honour (if so we may name the factions of Ligny and of Briçonnet) were both assembled when the Pisan advocate began to address the King:

"Now for nearly ninety years," * began Burgundio Lolo, "the city of Pisa, once the greatest in Italy, once carrying her Empire into the recesses of the East, has suffered the yoke of an intolerable servitude. The cruel avarice of Florence has brought our city into so great a depth of desolation that her streets are almost empty of inhabitants, for the most of her citizens, unable to endure this grinding slavery, have gone into a voluntary exile abandoning their native land. Those that remain, incapable of plucking from their hearts the love of country, have indeed renounced all else that renders life endurable. The acerb and cruel exactions of foreign taxes, the insolent rapine of private Florentines, the injustice that forbids us by art or trade or public office to recruit our fallen fortunes, have left us an empty life, plundered of all enjoyment: nay, dangerous even and deadly, for the clayey marshes that our ancestors kept with exact and pious diligence, are now so little drained, so long neglected that the waters of Maremma sap our fairest palaces and our churches, our houses, our public buildings fall into ruins while the miasma of those

* See the speech—true, we may suppose, in fact if not in phrase—as reported in Guicciardini's "History."

stagnant waters breeds a grievous fever in our midst. And where shall we turn to forget our misery and our dishonour? we, who are denied an outlet to our energy and our ambition? As we pass the void hours of our leisure in the ruined streets of our once glorious city, shall we not feel the pity of the ruin? shall we look unmoved upon the dishonoured remnant of the magnificence of our ancestors? Nay, since it is no shame to Pisa, after a long renown to be fallen in decay—because in all the eminence of this world there is inherent this fatality of corruption—were it not wiser, even for her conquerors, in musing on her ancient greatness to turn their hearts to pity, rather than to use so cruel an advantage over a city in whose decadence they should, in truth, behold the inevitable presage of their own?

"Alas, so cruel, so insatiable, so impious has been the Florentine dominion that, rather than return to that slavery, we would forfeit life itself. And now at last a hope—a dear hope of liberty—has dawned upon us; and we beseech you, O King of France, with tears—not only these few visible tears of mine, but, invisible and ample, the lamentations of all the distant city—here at your feet, O King, I beseech you to remember what justice, what piety, what clemency of a magnanimous prince would shine for ever round your name should you choose to be the Father and Deliverer of Pisa, rather than the Minister of the slavery of Florence."

There was a little silence. In these accents men seemed to hear an echo of that natural law that lives immutable behind the convenience of nations—*νομὶμα*

ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν. The King's face glowed; and the enthusiasm of Ligny and Piennes was reflected in the demeanour of Beaucaire, a rash and low-born person moved by pity, moved by Pisan money also (if we are to believe Guicciardini), moved certainly by rivalry of Briçonnet. The other party waited somewhat anxiously for the Florentine ambassador to answer Lolo. Soderini, Bishop of Volterra, was a practical and eminent statesman, but on that excited audience his words fell without wings to reach their hearts.

Florence, he said, had bought Pisa with good money. She had been kinder than she need have been, for when the wilful Pisans yielded, half-dead with famine, she had brought more victuals than fire-arms to finish their subjection. She had the right to use her chattel as she would, and had she been a thousand times more harsh who should come between a man and his own? It was ridiculous to prate of the ancient grandeur of Pisa—God had made an end of that long before the Florentines, and she had been a poor bargain to Florence ever since the hour of her purchase.

So spoke the hard-headed Bishop of Volterra. But even as reported by a Florentine historian these arguments do not make any great effect; and it was quite clear, as he avows, that the Pisan advocate had made a far deeper impression on the King. And as, that very week, Briçonnet was sent to Florence upon a diplomatic mission, the party of Pisa remained triumphant in the camp where with (Commines in Venice and Briçonnet in Tuscany) Beaucaire and Ligny and

Piennes held for the moment the whole of Royal favour.

IV.

Louis de Ligny-Luxembourg, Grand Chamberlain of France, cousin of the King through his Savoyard mother, was the son of that unfortunate Comte de St. Pol decapitated by Louis XI. He was not only one of the great nobles of France, but one of the first gentlemen in Europe, for his house was ancient and illustrious by descent and especially fortunate in marriage. Nevertheless the young man was poor; yet owing to his charming manners, his courage and adroitness, he was a most important factor not only in the Court of the King but in the Court of Orleans. The Count of Ligny, chivalrous, amorous, and pitiful, flits, for a brief moment, like the figure of Youth in an allegory—across the serious stage of the Italian wars; and his tragic childhood and his melancholy marriage seem to throw out with a brighter lustre the intrinsic brilliance of that scintillating presence.

He was, say the French chroniclers, "prince gentil vaillant, adroit et généreux," a pattern for nobles and the beloved of ladies. Guicciardini, looking from another point of view, calls him juvenile, inexperienced, and light. To quote a final authority, Commines briefly gives the reason for our dwelling on him: "Above all others," says he, "this young gentleman especially favoured the Pisans' cause."

Ligny had ever been a politician of Orleans' party, that earlier faction so long stimulated by intriguing Venice, which aimed not only at the conquest of

Naples, but also at securing Milan. With these two great possessions at either end of Italy, it was clear that Pisa would make an excellent half-way house. Pity for the Pisans was probably the essential motor of Ligny's action, yet there is no doubt he desired to further the policy of Orleans. And before the winter was over, Ligny's marriage gave him a personal interest in the game.

In the early spring of 1495, Charles VIII. had arrived in Naples. With that fatal lack of policy which was destined to frustrate a more than mortal triumph, he began to lavish the possessions of the Neapolitan aristocracy upon his favourites and countrymen. A wiser King would have conciliated the native barons and wedded their interest to his own, so that when he came to leave the country he should leave behind him a whole nobility of viceroys. But Charles only thought of rewarding his favourites of the hour. The daughter of the Prince of Altamura, the last of her house, the heiress of immense possessions, was reserved for Ligny.

Madonna Lionora was a young princess of more than common interest, the last Altamura in the direct line, the last of that race which claimed to be descended from the Three Kings of the East. It was easy to make the Count of Ligny virtually the Prince of Altamura by marrying him to this young girl. This was done, but Ligny was barely seven days the bridegroom of his lovely Mage when the King, alarmed at the preparations of the League, determined to march northwards. Ligny of course went with him, leaving his bride behind him in a convent. And on the long road

northwards the desire to be near his young wife and his new possessions gave a keener zest to the scheme of a Central Italian French dependency of which Ligny himself should be made the governor. When the army reached Siena, though the city was a fief of the Holy Roman Empire, and therefore implicated in the Anti-Gallic league, none the less the Republic declared for France, demanding Ligny for her governor. The young man left a garrison there under Gaucher de Tinteville, and went with the King, hoping to pursue a like policy in Pisa.

The King had not yet decided whether he would halt in Pisa or in Florence. On the eve of Corpus Christi, Wednesday, the 17th of June, the French reached Poggibonsi where the roads divide. Here they halted for a day to keep the festival, and here the King was met by no less a personage than Savonarola, accompanied by fifty notables of Florence. This at the moment must have appeared terribly against the plans of Ligny, for if there was a man in Italy whom the French regarded with a curious, half-superstitious respect, it was this authoritative friar, with the harsh sweetness in his voice, the saturnine head, the asper and loving expression in his painful smile, who, as one authorized of heaven, had foretold their advent before they were persuaded to the step.

Poggibonsi, as I have said, is the last considerable town before the ways divide that lead to Pisa and to Florence. At such a cross-road was also the mind of Charles. Which turning should he take? "Keep your vows, restore the cities, respect Florence, lest ye incur the awful judgment of God, whose name, unless

ye keep your oath, ye took in vain upon the altar of St. John in Florence!" So thundered Savonarola; and there were many things in favour of this plan; firstly, the strong personal influence of the prophetic Ferrarese; secondly, the fact that Charles was sore in need of ready money, and hoped to borrow it in Florence; thirdly, at Poggibonsi he had heard that war was begun, that Orleans was in Novara, and, therefore, he himself and his handful of troops in desperate need of the Florentine army. A little persuasion and no doubt the King would have gone to Florence; but Savonarola scorned to persuade, he menaced. The city, he said, was armed to the teeth; she would receive the King rather as a prodigal than a conqueror. If he wished to conciliate her, let him keep his word; then, but only then, she would shower her benefits upon the elect of God.

This accent was not so moving to the King as the entreaties of Burgundio Lolo. Pisa, as Charles knew very well, would receive him as a hero and a deliverer —but Pisa had neither men nor money.

In these uncertainties two days went by; the King alternately assuring Savonarola that he would keep his word to Florence, and protesting that he had not the heart to break that earlier promise given to the Pisans. Out of this hobble there was no way except by broken vows and treachery. It was a delicate question for a chivalrous prince, nourished, like Charles, on Amadis and Arthur: for to keep faith with the Pisans would be to ruin his ally; and to keep faith with Florence to hand over to slavery a people who had solemnly placed themselves under his protection. Nor were

the political advantages quite easy to decide. Florence, of course, offered men and money sorely needed; but Pisa offered an asylum in case of reverses further north, or in case the Florentines should prove as faithless as the rest of the Italians. For Pisa was not merely a friendly city, but a city actually in the hands of France. This was certainly an argument—"nevertheless," says Guicciardini, "I doubt if anything so logical could influence the King. Much more potent with such as he were the tears, and entreaties of the Pisans." Those tears, invisible and ample as the waters of life, Burgundio Lolo had quoted to the King at Rome; and after all these months the memory of the Pisan advocate pleaded successfully against the actual influence of Savonarola.

At last a straw decided the unsteady balance. At a village called Campana, or Cassino, near to Florence, the King heard of a cruel raid committed by the Florentines upon the Pisan town of Pontevalle. There had been French soldiers in the fort; but when the French archers came up to the rescue they found the little place untenanted save by dying men, wheeling birds of prey, and corpses. The King was furious against the Florentines; yet it was with the lightness of heart that follows the taking of a difficult decision that he set his back against the town, "et gaiement s'en alla dedans Pise."

V.

History is not decided by oratory. The eloquence of Lolo, the menaces of the Friar, had conspired with a

momentary distress and anger, to lodge the French in Pisa. It still remained to see what Charles would do. The first move promised little; in order to guard against a second surrender to the impulse of the moment Charles sent a messenger to Florence, and promised to speak the final word, only when he should have arrived in Lucca.

But if history is in fact decided by Necessity—that grim and resolute Anankê who cuts the most different characters to her pattern, making of a Louis XI., and a Henry V., so individual as princes, no more, when once the coronation day is over, than able continuers of the policy she imposes; if Necessity and the slow evolution of ideas control the individual, and leave him scarce more independent than the nail, which moves indeed, but only moves to follow the control of the attracting magnet; yet it is not merely by the unbroken sequence of Law that the world progresses. Comets and cataclysms, plagues and earthquakes, and in the moral world, sudden, fierce contagions of enthusiasm or ecstasy interrupt and modify their course.

Driven by a momentary resentment, a gust of pity and remembrance, into Pisa, Charles was no sooner in the city than the King resumed his empire over the Man. He sent, as I have said, an embassy to Florence, reassuring as best he could the potent and wealthy city, putting off his answer, and asking meanwhile for an instalment of money and three hundred lances. The Florentines sent no money and only eighty lances, and Charles perceived that the least extra strain would break the slender thread that

still bound her to the French. Henceforth he steeled his royal heart against impolitic pity. It was in vain that he looked on the statue of himself upon the bridge, embellished in sculpture, resolute, heroic, Saviour of the City, trampling underfoot the Lion of Florence and the Viper of Milan. It was in vain, that, at the entrance of the army, the little children of Pisa dressed in white satin sown with *fleur-de-lis* rushed to the gates to meet the soldiers, crying in their high, sweet, confident voices, "Viva Francia!" It was in vain that, in the early morning, as the King returned from the intenerating Sacrament of the Mass, he met in the streets the fairest ladies of the town, barefoot, dishevelled, dressed like slaves in coarse mourning garments, who dropped before him on their knees, sighing and wailing for liberty.

The most that Charles could do was to defer, to temporize, to vacillate; he could not be brought to pledge himself to more. He, with a remnant of his army, was alone in an inimical country, subject at any moment to encounter the forces of Venice, Milan, Spain, the Emperor and the Pope; meanwhile Florence was his one efficient friend. Florence to him had been a leal and honest ally; dare he desert her? ought he to repay her sacrifice with ruin? And yet this faithful Florence had behaved to Pisa in a fashion cruel and anti-human beyond words. And Pisa also had trusted him; Pisa was tenderly his friend. Could he fling the wounded hare which had taken refuge under his royal mantle to the fierce eyes and gaping jaws of the hound which served him?

The question wrung the conscience of the man.

But, for the King, the matter was easily decided. His first duty was to his country and his troops; Florence could help him to reach the forces of Orleans in safety and with some degree of glory; but Pisa could furnish no active aid at all.

Meanwhile, the army had become fired with entirely different convictions. Suddenly King Charles, the adored conqueror, the second Charlemagne, the unlettered and ugly little captain whose soldiers' devotion so amazed the Milanese, beheld himself in the midst of his troops almost without authority. The army, like one man, rose and spoke on behalf of the Pisans.

Insulated in this shelter of Pisa, with the offended Florentines continually harassing his outposts, with in front the fastnesses of the Apennines, and (God alone knew where) the five-toothed Trap of the League into which his little force must fall—in this terrible complication Charles beheld himself menaced by no less than the mutiny of his own army. And for what? Not on account of the light head and imprudent heart that had brought this handful of soldiers to fight such fearful odds. This rebellion was inspired purely by the pity inspired by men whose situation was certainly less hazardous than the peril of their indignant champions.

But all day long the army surged in front of the palace clamouring "Liberty! liberty!" in more virile voices than the Pisans'. The army infected the Court; and one day, when the King sat playing draughts alone with M. de Piennes, forty or fifty gentlemen of the Royal household with their partisans

forced their way into his chamber and declaimed the woes of Pisa. Charles was indignant, and spoke so roughly, that they took their persuasions and menaces elsewhere. Even the poor archers, says Commines, moved by pity for the tears and lamentations of the Pisans, threatened those whom they believed persuaded the King to keep his oath at Florence. A private archer menaced Briçonnet; others used rude language to Marshal de Gié; and for three nights President Gannay durst not sleep in his lodgings. The Frenchmen infected the Swiss; and these ferocious giants, who a few days later should massacre man, woman, and child at Pontremoli, proved themselves as passionate in their apology for liberty. "Do you want money?" cried young Sallezart their paymaster. "Is it mere money that leads you to this infamy? Take rather our collars, our buckles, and our silver ornaments; stop our wages and spend the sum of our arrears. We will pay you as well as Florence! only set the Pisans free!"

In front of such enthusiasm Charles dared not avow a contrary decision. It was in vain that Briçonnet and his party urged instant fidelity to Florence. It was useless for Commines to observe that keeping faith with Florence did not preclude a sentiment of tenderest concern for Pisa, though after all, as the excellent diplomat observed, "Divers cities in Italy that be in subjection are as evil-entreated as she"—*Sie ist nicht die Erste*. Charles would promise nothing to Pisa, nothing definite; but also he would make no vows to Florence. He knew that the task before his little army was of the sternest and of the

severest, physically impossible to discouraged and disaffected troops. Therefore he wrote to the Florentines saying that he would give his answer, not at Lucca, but at Asti; and while, in his heart, as we shall see, he meant to make the best of terms for Pisa, and then restore her to the Florentines, he left for the nonce, a French garrison in the city, three hundred picked men, difficultly spared, under the governorship of Robert de Balzac Seigneur d'Entragues. Thus, by a judicious temporizing, Charles hoped to untie the Gordian knot. By turning his back on the difficulty he thought he had suppressed it. And yet, were these three hundred men left behind in Pisa, likely to become more obedient to an absent monarch? Was Entragues, a man of Orleans' household, Ligny's candidate, likely to carry out the views of Commines or of Briçonnet against the avowed policy of his master and his patron? Charles, it may be supposed, did not ask himself these questions. He bestowed on Entragues, not merely the governorship of Pisa, but the command of the frontier castles, and, without further hesitation, left the town.

Robert de Balzac, Seigneur d'Entragues, was, says Commines, a very ill-conditioned fellow. But a similar opinion has been entertained by many historians for the most successful of their political opponents. Robert de Balzac was the son of Jean d'Entragues and his wife the sister of the famous Comte de Dammartin. Robert was a very young man when the accession of Louis XI. brought about the disgrace and exile of his all-powerful uncle. Every student of

history is familiar with the legend of that great disgrace: how the estates of the unhappy minister were divided among the favourites at Court; how his wife with her suckling child was left destitute and hunted out of all her castles; how forsaken by all her friends, she wandered like an excommunicated woman along the lanes of Dammartin begging for her bread, until a poor day-labourer, Anthoine Le Fort, took the abandoned Countess to his hovel and sheltered her and her baby, eighteen months old, the starving little godson of the Duke of Bourbon. Jeanne was still in the peasant's hut; her husband had fled for his life to Germany; when, as a last effort, Robert de Balzac, the Count's nephew, was sent to Court to plead his cause. It was no light task to undertake. Men had been banished or odiously imprisoned for entreating the pardon of Dammartin, and many well-meaning friends would have dissuaded the young man. But he went his way, arriving at Court about the end of 1466, and pleaded so well that, after several audiences, the King recalled his uncle and placed him high in favour.

Such was the man—about forty years of age, rhetorical, impulsive, brave, generous, and audacious whom the King had left in command at Pisa.

VI.

The little army of Charles, dragging its artillery with lacerated hands across the Apennines, cutting its way through the Venetian forces at Fornovo, arrived at last in Asti; and, when August came, the

prospect of peace began to brighten before them. The King had come to terms with Florence; and—granted the inevitable treachery of the situation—the Treaty of Turin was not unkind. It is true that the King agreed to restore the city of Pisa, with the other Tuscan fortresses, to his ally of Florence; but on the express proviso of not merely an amnesty for the Pisans. Henceforth they were to trade by sea and land on equal terms with Florence, they were to enjoy the same civil rights, their ancient arts of navigation and ship-building were to be released from embargo, and their sequestered property was to be given back to their possession. Charles had put his muzzle on the hound; Pisa, though restored to her immemorial energy, should henceforth be protected by the chief ally of Florence.

It was, in fact, a comparative equality that Charles proposed. Still remaining an intrinsic part of the Florentine territory, as indeed the safety and prosperity of that Republic demanded, henceforth the admirable commercial situation of Pisa was not to be turned merely to a Florentine profit, nor were the Pisans to be entirely governed for Florentine ends and by a Florentine Council. In their government henceforth the Pisans themselves should have a place and a right; and the only exclusive advantage which the Florentines should retain would be that superior dignity, that reserve of power, with which a powerful mother-country inevitably controls her colonies and her dependencies. Henceforth in law, in all that can be assessed by franchise and by jurisdiction, the Pisans should stand on an equal footing with the Florentines.

This decided, Charles, satisfied he had been unfair to nobody, on August 16th, wrote from Turin a letter to Entragues, signed with his own signature and countersigned by Orange, Vincula, Briçonnet, Gie, De la Trémouille, Commines, and (somewhat to our surprise) Piennes. This list of names is eloquent of the triumph of the diplomatic party; Ligny is not there, nor D'Amboise nor Étienne de Beaucaire, though these were among the nearest of the Royal counsellors. It was, in fact, necessary that something should be done at once. Orleans and his men were still starving in beleaguered Novara; Montpensier and the army were fighting at desperate odds in Naples. Peace with Florence would immediately place in the hands of the King 70,000 ducats and 250 men-at-arms;* besides releasing the soldiers in Pisa, Murrone, Leghorn, Sarzana, Pietra Santa, and Librafatta, who with the Florentine contingent would be an efficient succour to Montpensier. But Florence would not pay the money until the fortresses were in her hand.

The King's letter to Entragues arrived in Pisa on the 29th of August. "You may feel," the letter ran,† "*on account of your oath*, a certain difficulty in placing the new Citadel of Pisa in other hands than ours, but we absolve and discharge you of that oath, and command you, so soon as you receive this letter, incontinent to deliver the said Citadel of Pisa into the hand of the Commissioners of Florence, provided that

* A man-at-arms was a varying quantity of soldiers, from five in France to three or sometimes one in Italy.

† Archives de Florence, No. 52, quoted by Cherrier, ii. 294.

one or any of our Councillors assure you that the Government of Florence have accorded and agreed to our Articles."

"A cause du serment que vous avez fait, vous pourriez différer de ne mettre la dicte Citadelle neufve de Pise en aultres mains que les nostres." This phrase conveys the suggestion that on leaving Pisa, Charles had promised a permanent French protection to the city. At least it seems clear that Entragues had sworn to yield his position only to the French.

These three months Entragues and his men had lived as the saviours of Pisa with the Pisans, fêted by the citizens, lodged not only in the citadel but in the palace of the Medici upon Lung' Arno; no longer an insignificant portion of the motley hosts of France, but the beloved guests and masters of this exquisite Southern city. They had the advantage of the port from which to ship a succour to or from the armies in the South; they enjoyed the great pine-woods of the sea, full of game for hunting; they had grown to love the wide, soft views of fertile plains bounded by a dim line of blue mountains where their comrades held the frontier castles. The position of the French in Pisa was not only felicitous, but strong; and they were required to abandon it into the hands of the Florentines, allies, it is true, of their king, but to them desperate and deadly enemies with whom, in defiance of the truce, they had continually waged an aggravated and embittering guerilla war of raids and plunder. And these three months, which had increased the original suspicion and dislike which the French army entertained of Florence, had been spent

in befriending and helping the Pisans, for whom even at the first they had felt so divine a rage of pity, and whom they were now commanded to betray. Most of the men had probably made relations in the town. Entragues as we know from Guicciardini, was much in love with, and probably deeply influenced by, the daughter of Messer Luca del Lante; and a little later he married either this or some other Pisan lady, for Marin Sanuto speaks of San Cassano, the Pisan Ambassador at Venice, as "el cugnato d'Andrages." Thus passion, no less than resentment, and the sense of well-being as well as compassion bound Entragues to Pisa. Add to this, incredible as it may seem, the sentiment of loyalty; for long as was the reign of Louis XI., it had not been long enough to extirpate the feudal idea, and Entragues, although the subject of the King, felt himself in a far more intimate degree the vassal of Orleans, and the lieutenant of Ligny. Now, as I have said, the names of Orleans and Ligny are conspicuously absent from the signatures below the letter of the King. To yield Pisa would have been to reverse their policy; and it is possible (to Commines, Guicciardini, Giulini, Porto Venere, and other contemporaries, it appeared quite certain) that Orleans or Ligny wrote to Entragues, and bade him resist the decision of the King. This much at least is sure: *Entragues refused to yield the fortresses.*

Vainly the King reiterated his urgent letters—imploring letters, still preserved in the Florence Archives under the dates of the 29th and 31st of August, the 25th of September, the 1st and 22nd of October — letters, beseeching, commanding the

evacuation of the garrisons, but all in vain. Not only Pisa, but Sarzana, Pietra Santa, Librafatta, and Murrone, obstinately held out against the royal mandate; only the Governor of Leghorn, on the 17th of September, yielded to the entreaties of his sovereign. Meanwhile in Naples, in Gaeta, Taranto, and Atella, in all the desolate villages of the wild Abbruzzi, the famished and abandoned army looked northwards, in vain, day after day across the mountains. Winter began to whistle shrilly across the windy hills; blue mists and subtle fevers rose out of the marshy valleys; corn failed, and a cruel famine began to devastate the land; and still the promised reinforcements never came. Of that gallant army nearly every soldier should perish by hunger, shipwreck, or malaria; for the troops that were to bring them a succour out of Tuscany never left the cities where they dwelt.

On the 18th of September, Entragues drew up a formal treaty with the Signory of Pisa. If in three months the King did not re-enter Tuscany, he bound himself to evacuate the citadel, and leave it in the hands of Pisa. Meanwhile they were to supply him every month with the two thousand ducats necessary to pay and provision the garrison; and on his abandonment of the fortress they were to purchase his artillery and to give him the sum of 20,000 (or as Sanuto has it, 30,000) ducats for himself. These terms were not excessive: the Florentines a few years ago had cheerfully paid 150,000 ducats as the price of Pietro Santa, a less important place. It was, however, as much as Pisa could pay: and to raise

the sum the ladies of Pisa cheerfully sold the brightest of their jewels. And the Pisans in their gratitude for the staunchness and moderation of Entragues awarded him a large estate, newly confiscated from the Florentines, and a palace in the city. "It cannot be for money that he did it," remarks Guicciardini, "for certainly the Florentines would have given him twice as much." It was probably out of friendship and pity, out of a genuine enthusiasm, out of an antiquated sentiment of feudal devotion, combined with a desire to make a profit, that Entragues committed this fatal and disastrous error.

VII.

The Florentines were indeed in a peculiarly evil case; for Charles, who was their ally, found himself powerless to procure them the restitution of Pisa; and the Italian cities were resolved that, at no risk, must Pisa pass to the ally of Charles. That post, in the hands of the friends of France, would mean not merely a door always open from Marseilles into Tuscany, but a continual supply of help to the French garrisons in Naples. It was certain that Pisa must be kept, yet Pisa was too weak to stand alone; plot and counter-plot darkened the decision as to which great State the port of Pisa should belong.

From the 16th of September to the 14th of December, Captain Fracassa, the Duke of Milan's captain, held the town, dogged by the jealous surveillance of a Venetian commissary, while Entragues and his Frenchmen shut themselves inside the

citadel. A few months later the Sienese, Lucchese, and Genoese, united in a secret league with Pisa against the Florentines. Milan and Venice wove a ceaseless web of intrigue around the place. And it is quite possible that by persisting in the citadel, Entragues may have been animated by a lofty and heroic disobedience, hoping by his presence to maintain Pisa in fidelity to France, and to prevent it from strengthening the hands of the deadly enemies of his country.

Be this as it may, on the 1st of January, Entragues, having some days ago assisted at the expulsion of Fracassa, placed the citadel in the hands of the Pisan Signory. Great was the joy. Before the falling of the night, the hated fortress, built by the Florentines to dominate the town, was a shapeless heap of ruins. New money was struck, bearing the head of Charles VIII.; and salvo on salvo of artillery rang right across the plain to the very walls of Florence, announcing with a threat the dawn of the New Year, which had begun with liberty in Pisa.

Entragues himself, rich in the price of the gems of Pisan beauty, retired for a month or two to Lucca, to conclude his traffic on the fortresses. Pietra Santa he sold to Lucca, Sarzana to Genoa. He did a good turn to Pisa, distributing them, for a round sum, among her allies. But if he hoped that Pisa would maintain her independence by the protection of these humbler friends he must easily have been deceived: it was no later than the 26th of January when Messer Gianbernardin del Agnolo was sent to Venice with a humble message, entreating the august protection of that

city for the young Republic. It was Venice, rather than Milan, to whom the Pisans turned—Venice preponderate now in the Peninsula, sheltering in secret Pisa and Taranto under her wide-reaching ægis. During thirteen years from this date the shifting fortunes, the greeds and jealousies of the great Italian cities, fostered an artificial liberty in Pisa. Thrown like a ball from Milan to Venice, Venice to Maximilian, Max again to Venice, and thence to Cæsar Borgia, the unhappy Republic described the whole circle of desperate hope, agonized courage, misery, poverty, cunning, and betrayal. But with the anguish of her heroic vicissitudes we have, at this moment, no concern. The conduct of Entragues is our affair.

From that New Year's Day all hope was over for the French in Naples. Gaeta, Taranto, Atella, Ostia fell; Montpensier died of heartbreak, the troops of fever; the great Guelf kingdom, the vision of so many centuries, disappeared like fairy gold as soon as the French had grasped it.

In France, the Count of Ligny, Entragues' patron, was banished from the Court in disgrace. "He is gone to his estates in Picardy," wrote Antonio Vincivera, "like a desperate creature. The King has disgraced him because of the affair of Pisa." Thus Entragues, in the most effectual manner, had ruined his master's chances: and though in time Ligny was pardoned by the King, it was not in the lifetime of his bride. In February, 1498, the daughter of the Mages expired, far from the arms of Ligny, in her Nunnery at Naples.

But if the action of Entragues proved unfortunate to his friends, it had a more deadly consequence to his enemies in Florence. The party of Savonarola never recovered that failure of the French to give back Pisa. For some time, amid famine, pestilence, and ruin, they kept a weakening hold upon the city: "And still they stand in hope of the things above," mocks Maron Sanuto, in the spring of 1497, "and still they expect the coming of the King." A year later, in the May of 1498, Savonarola expiated that delusion by the flaming penance of the stake. "Questa è la fine dei cattivi!" ejaculates the Venetian Secretary.

Of all the actors in this complicated drama, the one person who suffered not at all was that dishonoured liberator, Entragues himself. He went back to live in Pisa where he seems to have displayed an eminent and almost official dignity. Twice in moments of difficulty it was proposed that Entragues should be sent as envoy to Venice, in place of his brother-in-law; but the necessity passed away. He remained in comfort and splendour in Pisa, where we read of his receiving the Lucchese ambassadors and conducting the diplomacy of the Republic. Pisa herself—unhappy devotee of liberty!—grew poorer and ever poorer, a humble pensioner on Venetian bounty: "They adore us," remarks Sanuto with some fatuity, "and, of a verity, they would starve without us." But, shorn of all her territories as she was, Pisa housed her liberator in a palace, and little did it matter to this voluntary exile that his King declared a readiness to decapitate him with royal

hands. Meanwhile he remained the natural centre of all dignity in Pisa. Here we catch a last glimpse of him in that sinister spring of 1498 which witnessed in Florence the martyrdom of Savonarola and in France the sudden death of Charles VIII. The whirlwind that destroyed these mighty vessels allowed the idle straw to float unharmed. "Entragues is back in Pisa," writes Sanuto, "which city is very poor now, having lost all her lands and subsisting only on that which we afford her. He has returned some time from his visit to Jerusalem. He lives with certain families in Pisa. He has money of his own, and gives himself his pleasures."

Five years later, when the eminence of Venice was dangerously threatened by Italian jealousy, the Pisans began to look about for a new Protector. "We will offer ourselves to the Devil," they declared, "rather than to Florence." As a matter of fact they offered themselves to Cæsar Borgia. They made very few conditions: two of them are noteworthy in view of the present history:

"The Pisans will bestow themselves upon Il Valentino if neither he nor the Pope will ever make peace or truce with Florence.

"The new Duke must promise the city never to make any peace or league with France."

The Gresham Press,

UNWIN BROTHERS,

CHILWORTH AND LONDON.

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